The Rise and Progress of Poverty in England,

From the Norman Conquest to Modern Times.

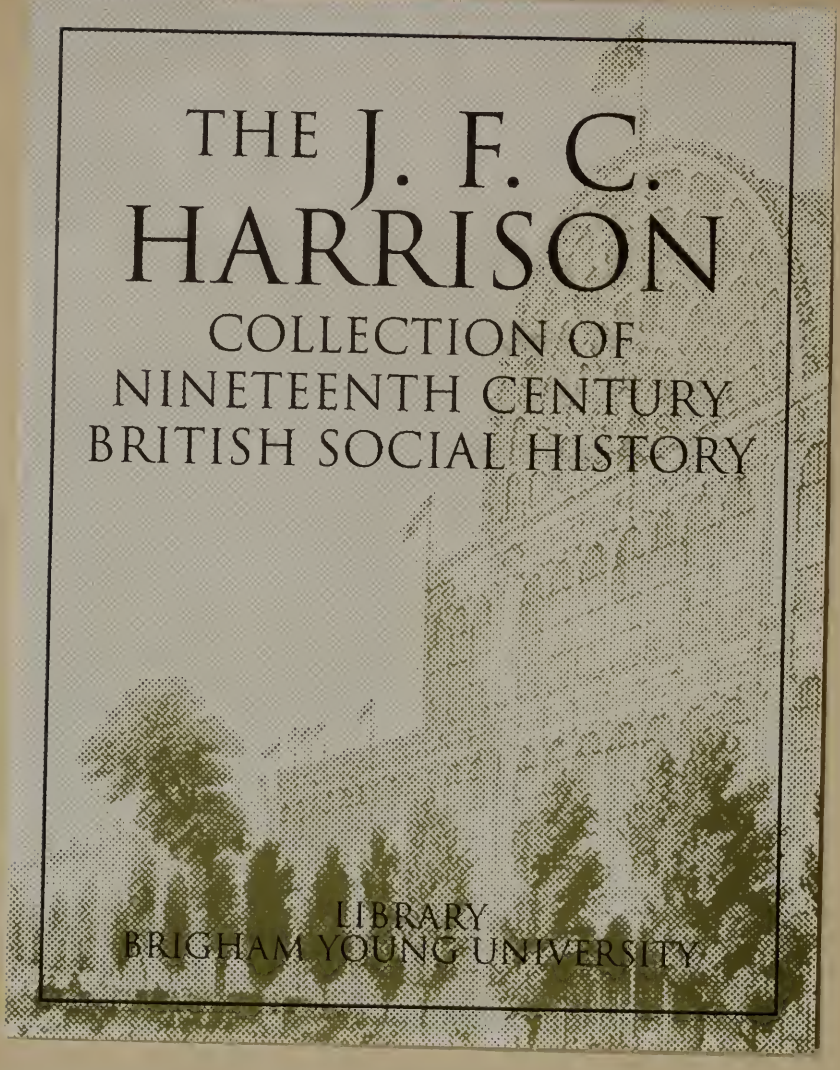
Extracted from various Histories and Condensed by

W. G. Wilkins, J.P., Derby.

London:

Headley Brothers,

Bishopsgate Street Without, E.C.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J. F. C. Harrison.

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To the Reader.

Those who are studying the History of the Poor People of England will find what information there is, scattered amongst many volumes. Green's "Short History of the English People" (Macmillan), is reliable; but scanty and meagre as it gets near to modern times. The "Industrial History of England" by H. de B. Gibbins, M.A. (Methuen, 3s.) is also valuable and very useful. Another similar excellent work is Warner's Landmarks of Industrial History.

The most important however is "Six Centuries of Work and Wages," by Professor J. E. Thorold Rogers, 10s. 6d. Eight chapters of it can be bought for a shilling in the cheap edition by Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd. The accuracy of this work is disputed by other writers, but as far as I have been able to judge, the balance of testimony is on his side.

The "Commonweal of England" has been reprinted lately (Cambridge Press, 5s.) and is very interesting. "Land Reform," by the Right Hon. Jesse Collings, J.P., M.P. (Longman's 12s. 6d.) has good accounts of the Peasants' Risings, and of the origin of our present land system. This book contains much valuable information, but its arrangement is peculiar.

For the "Digger Movement" I am indebted to articles in the "New Age." The Digger Movement in the days of the Commonwealth by L. H. Berens (Simpkin Marshall, 7s. 6d.) is the best authority on this period.

Perhaps, however, the greatest amount of information is to be found in "The State of the Poor," by Sir Frederick Eden. It was published in 1797 in three large 4to volumes, and is in some Public Libraries. The first volume is historical, whilst the other two give minute details as to the work and wages of the poor, furnished by Guardians in various parishes throughout the country. Long reprints of accounts are given

which show the fluctuations of the prices of food year by year for centuries. This work also contains a list of books and pamphlets on the subject of the poor and much other information.

For the various prices of bread and other commodities, Cobbett's Works should be studied. Published about 1820, in six volumes, being reprinted from the Annual Register. Pages 66 to 70 are drawn from this source. For the Nineteenth Century, "The Age we live in," 4 vols. (published by Mackenzie), is very full of information. Cassell's History of England, in the seven volume edition, is well worth reading for this period.

The period of the Enclosures has been admirably described in, "The English Peasantry and the Enclosure of the Common Lands," by Gilbert Slater, 10s. 6d., and the economic and social tendencies of the various periods have been most impartially described by Chestney (The Macmillan Co.)

If it is desired to read this book to an audience as an Illustrated Lantern Lecture, a set of Lantern Slides can be lent by the writer, sufficient for two evenings exhibition, at a charge of 7s. 6d. W. G. WILKINS.

This work is also published in crown 8vo, at Threepence, with special terms to Societies for quantities.

Literature upon the Land Question can be obtained from The National Housing Reform Council, 18, Dulverton Road, Leicester. The English League for the Taxation of Land Values, 376, Strand, London. The Land Nationalization Society, 432, Strand, London, and the Rural Housing Association, Parliament Mansions, Victoria Street, Westminster.

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Introduction.

There are many historians to relate the doings of Kings and Queens, and many chroniclers to tell of the splendour of their pageants and the glory of their wars. Our object will be to search out the varying fortunes of the poor, and if we can, to discover how the labouring classes have fared during the centuries through which our national history runs. There are no annals of these people, of their work and of their sufferings, except in the record of their wages, and the cost of their living. History which crowds its canvas with great names, tells us but very little of the common people, but they who take note of the pittance which the peasant or artizan earned, and of the cost at which he spent his wages on his needful food, can interpret a little of the hardship of his lot, the poverty of his life and the hopelessness of his condition.

As we examine the history of this land, we shall find that a strife almost equal to civil war has been going on for over six hundred years. On the one side we find the peasantry, who have been endeavouring to live upon their native land in peace and security. On the other side the aristocracy, persistently endeavouring to either retain the peasantry in serfdom, or to drive them off the soil, heedless as to whether they lived or died. We shall find that for four hundred years after the Norman Conquest, in spite of all opposition, the peasantry gradually improved their lot; and that then came terrible changes, brought about by aristocratic greed, through which the peasantry fell into awful grinding penury. This abject misery reached its worst about one hundred years ago, but its bitter fruits remain with us to this day.

England after the Norman Conquest, 1066.

When this country had been conquered by the Norman King William, it was very natural that he should have a survey made of his new dominions. He therefore sent officials to enquire about all the various estates of the realm, as to who held the numerous Manors, what were their values, how many families lived upon them, and as to what cattle each family possessed.

This information was most carefully obtained, and was written down in what we call the Domesday Book, which now forms an invaluable record of the condition of the People of England eight hundred years ago. The people seem to have numbered about two millions, one eighteenth of our present population. Three quarters of these were engaged in agriculture, the rest were gentry, towns folk, monks, and clergy. The larger part of the country was forest and uncleared moor or fen land, but there were quite a thousand little Manors or villages dotted down all over the face of the country.

These were small groups of low one-roomed huts, with thatched roofs, without any windows, and with few, if any, chimneys. They were surrounded with large tracts of open arable land, divided into long narrow strips, and open common or pasture land, which reached up to the forests or the confines of the next village. In the centre of this Manor, or village, there was usually the Church, a corn mill, and the Manor House, wherein the Lord of the Manor generally lived.

The Manorial System.

By this Manorial or feudal system the people were in a great measure tied to their village homes, as they had no choice but to live where they were born, and to serve the master upon whose Manor they lived. So long as they stayed in their native village they must serve their lord, in tilling his ground or looking after his cattle. For this they were paid no wages, but they had their cottages and the free use of strips of land to sow or plant for themselves. The land that was held by each man was not all in one place, but scattered amongst the strips that were held by his fellow villagers. They could not sell their land, nor leave the Manor without their lord's permission. In fact they could not give their daughters in marriage or sell an ox without consulting their masters. And yet they were not slaves, for slavery and serfdom had almost disappeared. Every few months they gathered together in the Manor Court and took part in the election of the petty Manorial officers, the Reeve, the Reaper, the Ale Taster, and others. At these Manor Courts, presided over by the Steward of the Manor, disputes as to the possession of land, or inheritance, were decided, oftentimes by a jury of the villagers.

The medieval Manor was thus a little world to itself. The people lived hard laborious lives, but food was plentiful and cheap. They had little or no money, but they had common pasture for their cattle, and the use of the woods for their swine. They knew next to nothing of the outside world, but they formed part of a small co-operative commonwealth, self supporting and self contained.

Advantages of the Manorial System.

Whatever may or may not have been the legal rights of the cultivators of the soil to own it, prior to the Norman Conquest in 1066, there is no question whatever that since then, the King of England has claimed, as representing the people to be the sole owner of the soil of England. William the Conqueror realised this. "That the King of Domesday is the supreme landlord of all the land of the nation, the old folkland had become the King's, and all private land is held mediately or immediately of him."

The granting of the various Manors to his nobles was for several reasons a wise stroke of policy upon the part of the King. They were rarely if ever absolute gifts. Some had in return to find the King in bows and arrows, others to supply fish and game, some to supply armed attendants, and most of them to make some money payments on account of their holdings.

In these early days there was no other form of taxation than these services which were rendered by the peasantry to their lords, and by the lords to the King. Money was not in very general use. Imports and exports were trifling in amount, so the total revenues of the Crown for government and for warfare was found by the Manorial lords. During these successive centuries the landed aristocracy have striven to destroy all joint and common ownership of the soil, to transfer taxation from themselves to the shoulders of the poor, and to transform themselves from being the King's tenants into absolute owners of the soil.

The Decay of the Manorial System.

The Manorial or feudal system lasted about three hundred years after the Norman Conquest, and then gradually broke up, through changes which occurred in the condition of the people.

The lord of the Manor, when he owned several estates, usually lived at them in turns, with his family and servants, eating up the provisions the cottars brought in to the Manor House, and then travelling on to his next Manor. As money became more used, he found it more profitable to let some of his Manors to tenants for given rents, payable either in money or goods. A distinct class of farmer was thus brought into existence, who paid a rent for his farm, instead of continuing to give the military or feudal service that his fathers had done.

The numbers of the English people had about trebled in the three centuries, and as the law divided each man's land amongst his sons, it became increasingly difficult to enforce the proportionate amount of labour which was due from each cottar or villain. At the same time the increasing wealth of the peasants made the giving of the compulsory service more burdensome. We thus read of malt silver, wood silver, and larder silver taking the place of service.

As the farmers (as they began to be called) increased the size and produce of their lands, they wanted more men to help them, and thus they offered wages to those who were still bound to give their service to the lord of some neighbouring Manor. Meanwhile landowners wanting money were willing to sell to labourers their freedom, so that they might sell their labour to some one else. Thus working for wages came into fashion in England six hundred years ago.

The Black Death, 1349.

The decay of the Manorial system was hastened by a most awful plague which appeared in this country in 1349, and is generally known as the Black Death. Of the four or five millions who then formed the population, from one third to one half perished. Contemporary historians place the mortality at nine-tenths, but from various records we may safely consider that half the population died. The ravages were the greatest in the larger villages or towns where filthy and undrained streets afforded the pestilence a suitable welcome. In the burial ground in London it is said that fifty thousand corpses were cast into the great pits cut for them. Nearly sixty thousand died at Norwich, while at Bristol the living were hardly able to bury the dead. Half the priests in Yorkshire perished, and in Norwich half the parishes were left without clergy.

The scarcity of men upset all the arrangements of the country, and for a time rendered cultivation almost impossible. Harvests rotted on the ground, fields went untilled, the sheep and the cattle strayed through the corn, for there were none to guide or drive them.

Labouring men become so much in demand that "landless men" wandering about in search of work became for the first time masters of the labour market. They naturally rose to the occasion by asking double or treble wages to what they had been getting prior to the plague. Employers, equally naturally, were averse to paying more money, and so came about that first great struggle in English history between Capital and Labour.

The Statute of Labourers.

As Parliament consisted of landowners, and as the King was the greatest landowner of all, we can see how bitterly this claim for higher wages was resented. The first step therefore was for the King to issue a proclamation and Parliament to pass a statute in 1351. This Act made it a penal offence to be out of work, and gave every employer the right to demand any unemployed man's service, at the wages that he used to pay for such work two years before the plague. The Act gives us a schedule of these wages: "haymaking 2d. per day, mowing 5d. per acre or 5d. per day, reaping 2d. to 5d., without meat or drink or other courtesy to be demanded, given or taken." The men to be publicly sworn to obey, and on refusal to be put in the stocks for three days, or sent to the nearest gaol, until they shall justify themselves. As this Act proved useless, even sterner measures were adopted. The labourer was forbidden to leave his parish in search of better paid employment, on pain of imprisonment and outlawry. If he was captured, he was to be burnt on the forehead with a hot iron made in the shape of a letter F in token of his falsity. Even these cruel measures did not satisfy the Manorial lords, and twenty-seven years later a still more rigorous Act was passed, making it a crime to receive, employ or harbour, these "malicious and riotous rebeales." Bailiffs, gaolers and all officials are enjoined to take their bodies and imprison and chastise them. Thus were honest hearted Englishmen tracked and hunted from place to place like wild beasts, fastened in the stocks, kept in filthy prisons, and branded with irons 500 years ago, if they tried to get an increase of their wages.

The Rise in Wages.

Yet in spite of these laws the price of labour kept advancing. Before the plague women generally received one penny a day for field labour; after the plague their wages went up to 2d. and 3d. a day, and at this time the ordinary charge for boarding an adult in full victuals was from one penny a day to one shilling a week.

The practice of paying men 365 days to the year became general, Sundays and holidays included. Good workmen asked their price; thus at Windsor in 1408 four carpenters got 6d. a day each and four fivepence. At York Cathedral six stonemasons get £8 8s. 0d. a year each, six others £7 16s. 0d., and six more £6 3s. 0d. each. As their board at one penny a day only came to 30s. 5d. a year, they got a good living wage.

Very often workmen were fed in the bargain, and some employers made no deductions from the wages for the food supplied. Food was becoming plentiful and men were scarce. There were no master men; all who wanted work doing engaged their own men.

The increased wages that were paid is shewn by the fact, that in proportion as labour entered into an article, its price advanced. Salt nearly doubled, coal and iron more than doubled. Laths went up 60 per cent., tiles 75 per cent., and hurdles, horse shoes and ploughs doubled in price, whilst wheelwrights made wheels trebled in cost.

When the King wanted builders he sent for men from distances of 150 miles, paying them not only whilst at work but per mile for the distance traversed in coming and returning. The King's agent was well paid by his master, and often by those employers whose men he purposely neglected to engage.

How the Freedmen lost their Freedom.

This rise in the rates of wages was especially galling to the Manorial lords who wanted men to sow and reap their crops. Many of them had sold to their old villains their freedom, and now regretted that they could not compel their service as in the olden days. They found on all sides a decreased market for all they had to sell, and an advancing market for all they wanted to buy. With the loss of life caused by the plague, there was for a time a diminished demand for their beef and mutton, pigs and poultry, and the competition of those who had once been their serfs irritated and annoyed these landed gentry.

Having failed in their first policy of keeping down wages, the landlords tried to get the labour they required for nothing. The documents which recorded how the villains had paid for or earned the freedom they so much prized, were all in the keeping of the lords or their stewards. What could be easier than for lawyers and stewards to find mistakes in the old parchments. Then the tenants were summoned to the Manorial Court, which was presided over by the same steward who was lawyer, judge and jury in one. If the poor tenants appealed to the judges of the land, they were landowners also, and behind the Courts was Parliament, an assemblage of landowners, and over Parliament a King, the greatest landowner of all.

The Lollard Preachers.

It was at this time that another revolution began in our national history. In this dark period came John Wycliffe, the great social as well as spiritual reformer. He translated the Bible into the common tongue, and the sacred story was eagerly received by the great mass of the English people. They gathered in the streets and by the roadsides to hear the reading of this wonderful book. The thought of our common origin specially touched them, and they rhymed the couplet:

"When Adam delved and Eve span
Who was then the gentleman."

Now Wycliffe was more than a great preacher. He could inspire hundreds of other men with his zeal for the uplifting of the poorest of his country. These men went up and down the land, clad in coarse undyed woollen garments, winning the affection of the common people who heard them gladly. They helped the people to form trades unions, for which they acted as treasurers and as messengers to other parts of the country. One of their number, a priest of Kent named John Ball, said: "Good people, things will never be well in England, so long as there be villains and gentlemen. By what right, are they whom we call lords, greater than we? On what ground have they deserved it? Why do they hold us in serfage? They have leisure and fine houses; we have pain and labour, and the wind and rain in the fields, and yet it is of us and our toil that these men hold their estate." Well done, John Ball. No wonder that the aristocracy called him a mad Priest.

The Peasant's Revolt, 1381.

John Ball was cast into prison, and might have died there but for the war, which broke out with Spain and France. To get money for that war a poll tax was levied upon every adult in the realm. The injustice of the tax set England ablaze. Wat Tyler, an old soldier, resented the abominable conduct of the collector towards his daughter, and killing the scoundrel took the lead of the hundred thousand Kentish men who flocked around him. John Ball was liberated, and the revolt spread like wildfire. The insurgents were strongly against plunder, but their burning of all the Manor House records shews how fraudulent they considered the stewards and lawyers to have been. Their uncouth rhymes express clearly their longing for a right rule, for plain and simple justice, and their resentment at the perversion of the law to the cause of oppression.

The young King Richard II., then only a boy of 16, went out to meet the insurgents at Mile End. "I am your King and Lord, good people; what will ye?" "We will that you free us for ever," shouted the peasants, "us and our lands, and that we be never named nor held for serfs." "I grant it," replied Richard, and he bade the people go home, relying upon his issuing charters of amnesty and freedom.

The next day the King met Tyler again at Smithfield, where the Mayor of London struck Tyler to the ground with his dagger. Richard however shouted: "I am your captain and King, follow me." They followed him to the Tower, letters of pardon were issued, and the revolt was at an end.

Landowners versus Labourers.

When however the question of the emancipation of the villains came before Parliament, the landowners entirely repudiated the King's action. The members declared "that the serfs were their goods, and that the King had no power, without their consent, to grant them their liberty." And this consent, said they, "We have never given, and never will give, were we all to die in one day."

The rebellion over, a series of reprisals began too atrocious almost for belief. The charters of freedom were all cancelled, and the promises of pardon revoked. Sir Robert Tresilian, the Chief Justice, went on commission, and before him above fifteen hundred men were found guilty, and in sundry places put to death. The gallows was considered too slow, so great a multitude must die that beheading was resorted to for the rank and file, whilst the leaders were all hung, drawn and quartered. John Ball's body was cut in pieces and sent to four of the principal cities of the realm.

Not content with the re-infliction of the Statute of Labourers, which kept down their wages to the lowest pittance, the landowners proceeded to oppress the poor in every possible way. They forbade the child of any tiller of the soil being allowed to go to school, or to receive any education. They forbade them being apprenticed in any town where they might learn any trade, so that the labourers children might always remain ignorant drudges to work for the pittance their lordly employers doled out to them.

Piers, the Plowman, 1377.

The best records that we have of the condition of the poor at this period are to be found in the poem by a poor priest named William Langland, entitled the "Vision of Piers, the Plowman."

He dreams of a great pilgrimage, but his world is that of the poor, and the narrowness, monotony and misery of their lives is in his verse. It is in search of truth that his pilgrims come, and their guide neither clerk nor priest, but Peterkin the Plowman, whom they find plowing in the fields.

He it is "who bids the knight no more wrest gifts from his tenants nor misdo with the poor. Though he be thy underling here, well mayhap in heaven that he be worthier set, and with more bliss than thou."

We can gather some details of the cottagers life and of the scantiness of their fare. "I have no penny," says Piers, the Plowman, "pullets for to buy, nor neither geese nor pigs, but two green cheeses, a few curds and cream, and an oaten cake, and two loaves of beans and bran baken for my children. I have no salt bacon, no nor cooked meat collops for to make, but I have parsley and leeks, and many cabbage plants, and eke a cow and a calf, and a cart mare to draw afield my dung, while the draught lasteth, and by this livelihood we must all live till Lammas-tide, and by that I hope to have harvest in my croft."

The aim of the plowman is work, and to make the world work with him. He proclaims a righteous life to be better than a host of indulgences, and says that God sends His pardon unto Piers, the Plowman, when the priests refuse it to him.

The Rising under Jack Cade, 1450.

Seventy years after the Peasants' Revolt under Wat Tyler, another rising occurred, led by Jack Cade, who had had some experience as a soldier. From the complaint of these men of Kent, we gather that villainage and serfdom had about died out, for they make no mention of them, only asking for political reform. About twenty years earlier the aristocracy had deliberately restricted the franchise to those free-holders holding lands worth forty shillings a year. In the words of the Act of Parliament restricting the Franchise, it was aimed against "voters of no value whereof everyone of them pretended to have a voice equivalent with the more worthy knights and esquires." Another statute also shews the aristocratic temper when it became law, that every knight of the shire, or member of Parliament for a county, should be "a gentleman born."

Cade and his party contended that "the people of the shire are not allowed to have their free election in the choosing of knights of the shire, but letters have been sent to the great rulers of all the county, the which enforceth their tenants and other people by force to choose other persons than the common will is."

The refusal of the King's council to receive the complaint was followed by a victory of Cade over the Royal forces at Sevenoaks, and the occupation of London by the insurgents. Then the complaint was received and a general pardon granted; but the Kentishmen had hardly dispersed to their homes before Cade was pursued and slain as he fled into Sussex. No reforms or apparent good followed this rising, but there was a bloodthirsty slaughter of the reformers.

The Cheapness of Food in the Middle Ages.

To our modern ideas the prices of food in the Middle Ages seem absurdly low. They can be illustrated by some "hotel bills" which have been left on record by the warden and his fellows of Merton College, who went on horseback with four servants from Oxford to Newcastle. One of their days gives us a good idea of their ordinary expenditure. For seven men and horses, for one Sunday the charges were:

Bread	...	4d.	Candles	...	¼d.
Beer	...	2d.	Fuel	...	2d.
Wine	...	1¼d.	Beds	...	2d.
Meat	...	5½d.	Fodder for Horses		10d.

Potage ¼d.

Thus it cost only 1s. 1d. for food for seven men for one day, and as these were hotel prices it is evident that labourers would be able to live even upon less. Sometimes they have eggs or vegetables for a farthing, or a chicken. Beds generally cost 2d. for the seven travellers; when in London rather more, when the servants only sleep at the inn only one half-penny a night was charged.

In a French manual, speaking of travels in England, the servant who is sent forward to engage a room at the inn utters the wish "that there are no fleas, nor bugs, nor other vermin." "No Sir, please God," replies the host, "for I make bold that you shall be well and comfortably lodged, save that there is a great peck of rats and mice."

The inns were known by means of an horizontal stake over the door, with a tuft of foliage fastened at the end. A custom which gave rise to our old proverb, "Good wine needs no bush."

The Labourer's Golden Age.

In the period about the year 1500 the condition of the poor people reached its highest point, and it has therefore been named the Golden Age of the English Labourer. The large landowners were gradually finding out that they could not keep down wages by Act of Parliament, and that they must either accept lower rents or farming their own land pay more wages to the labourers to work for them. The cost of wages for harvesting upon one estate went up from £3 13s. 9d. before the plague, to £12 19s. 10d. in subsequent years. A peasant could then earn enough in thirteen weeks' work to keep himself, wife and children in food for a year. He usually received 4d. a day, or 2s. 4d. a week, which seems little to us until we learn that bread was a halfpenny the large loaf, and a farthing a smaller one. Beef and mutton were a farthing a pound, and pigs only 4d. each. An old song tells us how "A bushel of the best wheat was sold for fourteenpence, and forty eggs a penny that were both good and new." In the old records 25 a penny was a more usual price. Potatoes, tea, coffee, cocoa, and most of our modern viands were unknown, but the price of beer was one halfpenny the gallon. The labourer could thus earn 8 loaves of bread a day, whilst now he can only earn 6 loaves a day, but a hundred years ago he could not have bought three loaves with a day's wage.

Their houses certainly were mud huts, and they often suffered from scurvy through eating salt meat all winter, but they were independent, joyous and free. The civil war, known in history as the War of the Roses, was going on in the country, but it had no bearing upon the work and wages of the so-called common people.

How the Sheep turned out the Men.

The beginning of the downfall of the English peasant was the substitution of sheep farming upon a large scale by the landowners, in place of the letting of the land to the farmers, as they had formerly been doing. A very great demand was springing up, both in this country and on the Continent for English wool, and as sheep farming requires so few labourers compared with tillage, many thousands of small holdings were massed together to form large sheep runs.

Before sheep farming could be practised on any large scale, it was necessary to enclose the land. Up to then there had been few hedges or barriers, and plenty of common lands for even the poorest cottagers to graze their cattle upon. But now, however, the Lords of the Manors had an opportunity of getting rid of tenants they disliked, by the simple process of seizing their land and enclosing it for the use of their own sheep.

A commission of the year 1517 records wholesale depopulation, the houses lying waste, and the inhabitants departed, even the churches falling into ruin, by reason of the break up of the villages and the spread of sheep farming.

An Act of Parliament, after recounting the evils that come from "greedy and covetous people who accumulate in their hands such great portions of the lands of the realm from the occupying of the poor husbandman, because of the great profit that cometh from sheep, went on to provide that under heavy penalties no person was to keep more than 2,000 sheep.

Thus it came about that the landowning class, which had been trying so obstinately to keep the labourers on their estates in bondage, now strove to eject them from their native soil.

The Unemployed Problem begins.

The bitterness of ejection was increased by the iniquitous means which were often employed to bring it about. According to Sir Thomas Moore, the farmers were got rid of either by fraud or force, or tired out with repeated wrongs into parting with their property. In this way it comes that these poor wretches (men, women, husbands, orphans, widows, parents with little children, households greater in number than in wealth), all these emigrate from their native fields without knowing where to go. The sale of their scanty household stuff drove them to wander homeless abroad, to beg and to steal, or to be thrown into prison as vagabonds.

Parliament was not ignorant as to the cause of the wretchedness that was thus being brought about. An Act of Parliament of 1534, in Henry the VIII's reign, describes the increasing evils and desolation resulting from "the wilful waste of houses within this realm and laying to pasture lands, which customably have been used for tillage." It states that in some places "where two hundred persons were occupied and lived by their lawful labour, now there are occupied two or three herdsmen, whereby husbandrie, which is one of the greatest commodities of this realm, is greatly decayed, and the defence of this land against our enemies outward, feebled and impaired." The statute then enacts that at least twenty acres of land shall be attached to each farmhouse, and that the owner keep the same in repair.

As this Act was not sufficiently drastic, another was passed in the same reign, which provided that "whosoever decayeth any town, hamlet or house of husbandrie, or shall convert tillage into pasturage, shall forfeit half the profits thereof until the offence be removed." As Lord Bacon said "This did wonderfully concern the might and mannerhood of the Kingdom."

Bishop Latimer's Sermons.

A good idea of the changes that were coming in the farmers' condition can be gained from passages in the sermons of Bishop Latimer, one of the noblest characters in English history. In one sermon he says: "My father was a yeoman and had no lands of his own, only he had a farm of three or four pounds a year at the utmost, and hereupon he tilled as much as kept half a dozen men. He had walk for one hundred sheep, and my mother milked thirty kine. He kept me to school; or else I had not been able to preach before the King's Majesty now. He married my sisters with five pounds, or twenty nobles apiece; so that he brought them up in godliness and the fear of God. He kept hospitality for his poor neighbours, and some alms he gave to the poor."

Now this was when Latimer was a boy. He tells us that in his manhood the rent of this farm had gone up to at least £16. To compare these figures with modern ones, we must at least multiply by 10. The rent therefore had increased at least £120 a year in our money.

The paying of this extra rent meant to the tenant all the difference between prosperity and severity, for Latimer goes on to say that the new tenant "is not able to do anything for his prince, nor for his children, nor give a cup of drink to the poor." No wonder he concludes, "If you wish to paint and gild Christ in your Churches, see that before your eyes people die not for lack of meat, drink and clothing."

The nobility must have felt uncomfortable during his sermons, for he straightly charged them with reducing the yeomanry to slavery for the sake of acquiring private wealth.

The Debasement of the Currency.

The great change which came over the working classes of this country came about during the reign of Henry the VIII., and was principally caused by his extravagance and wastefulness. He came to the throne in 1509, succeeding his thrifty father, Henry the VII., and soon succeeded in squandering all his father had saved. The people made him liberal grants, but these also soon disappeared, and Henry was in difficulties, not knowing how to keep up his ridiculous wars and costly pageants.

One of the methods Henry adopted for the raising of revenue was to debase the coinage, especially reducing the amount of silver in the shilling. As the shilling would purchase as much food at the beginning of his reign as a half sovereign would do in our day, it was a very important standard of value. It was a coin which had only recently been introduced, and the pound of silver was made into thirty-seven shillings and sixpence. The shilling originally cost over elevenpence in silver, but Henry had so much alloy introduced by degrees into it that at last it only contained three pennyworth of silver.

Of course the people found it out, and refused to accept the new coinage at its face value. The natural result was that all articles apparently went up in price, so that it cost thirty pence to buy what could before have been bought for ten pence. Wages certainly went up, but not to the same extent, only by fifty per cent. Wages are always slow to rise, and labourers' wages only went up from 2s. 4d. per week to 3s. 6d., whilst artizan's went from 3s. to 4s. 6d. per week.

The gorgeous display of the field of the cloth of gold looms large in ordinary histories, but in the end it is always the poor who pay for the extravagance of Royalty.

The Destruction of the Monasteries.

Until this reign the Monasteries had exercised a great influence upon English life. In early times the Monks reclaimed waste lands, educated the young, taught the people to work, and fostered architecture and literature. They had however gradually acquired great wealth, and had become very large landowners. It is believed that about one quarter of the land of this country was claimed by them, and thousands of the farmers were their tenants. The undue influence which they had over the superstitious enabled them to be continually increasing their domains at the expense of the community. As their riches increased, their discipline became more and more relaxed, so that disorders and excesses were prevalent in them.

As these Monasteries were so wealthy, Henry cast covetous eyes upon them. The rising Protestant opinion of the country was against them, so that it gave the King a good excuse to compass their destruction. It is certain they were not all abodes of either love or virtue, but Henry's reforming zeal was inspired by a knowledge of their wealth and his own bankrupt position.

A commission invented sufficient excuses, and in 1536 all the smaller Monasteries with an income of less than £200 a year were confiscated, and three years afterwards the larger ones all shared the same fate. About one thousand religious houses were thus closed, which had lands bringing in rents equal to two million pounds a year in our money. Only half-a-dozen bishoprics and a few Grammar Schools were founded with a small part of this revenue, and nearly all the lands went to the King's favourites.

The Confiscation of the Guild Lands.

Another great injustice which was detrimental to the prosperity of the working classes was the confiscation of the Guild Lands. The Guilds were the Trades Unions of the Middle Ages. The craftsmen in each town organised themselves in Societies or Corporations. They were the forerunners of Town Councils, and they gradually acquired great power and influence. Whatever faults they possessed, they kept up the quality of their members' work, they steadied and regulated the price of labour, and they provided for their members when old or infirm. When members of a Guild died, they had frequently left their property on trust for future members of the Guild to see that Masses were said in their Parish Church for the repose of their souls. They thus had an ecclesiastical importance, and were considered by the Protestant party to be too much allied to the old Romanist religion. Henry the VIII. got an Act passed for the confiscation of all these Guild lands which had been left for Chantry or singing Mass purposes; but he died before it was put into force.

In Edward the sixth's reign the Duke of Somerset sent commissioners to enquire into this question; if they had only seized the Chantry lands, no very great harm might have been done. It appears however that they seized and confiscated practically all Guild lands, excepting those of the London Companies or Guilds, who were strong enough to look after their own interests. So at one blow the workers lost their Trades Union savings and their old age pensions by the loss of the lands, upon the rents of which they were depending for their support.

The New Aristocracy

All the immense wealth from the plunder of the Monasteries and the confiscation of their lands was at the King's mercy. The little that was given to religion or to education was but as a blind to hide where the great bulk of the wealth was going. Deliberately wasted and squandered by Henry and his ministers, these enormous possessions passed to the hangers on at the Royal Court and founded a new aristocracy. The Russells, Cavendishes and Fitz Williams are familiar instances of families which rose from obscurity through these enormous grants of Church lands made to Henry's courtiers. Some historians assert that these lands were granted on the condition that the new owners would provide for the poor, and keep up the bridges and roads like the monks had done, but if they thus promised they did not perform.

Now the old monks had been easy landlords, and had often owned both land and cattle, letting both to their tenants on easy terms. The new landlords raised the rents and often confiscated the stock upon which the living of the farmers depended. Then in imitation of the land-owners around them, these new landowners would go in for sheep farming, so wholesale evictions became the order of the day, and thousands more peasants were sent adrift from hearth and home.

Whatever had been their faults, the Monks had been generous to the poor, and often provided food and shelter for all who needed them. The closing and destruction of the Monasteries robbed the poor of their only friends, and increased the army of lusty beggars which wandered up and down the land, without any resource except to rob and steal their daily food.

Enclosure of London's Common Fields.

Up to the beginning of the 16th century there were still vast tracts of common land where the poor people had the rights of pasture for their cattle, and of cutting firewood for their own use. Even around London there were these wide common fields where as the chroniclers said "the young men went with their bows and arrows and the antient persons walked for their pleasure.". But the landowners began enclosing these lands with hedges and ditches in order that they might claim them as private property. This went on until as we are told "the Londoners rubbed their eyes and asked what had become of the antient fields." At length however the pent up waters overflowed; a great number of persons assembled in the city, and a "turner" attired in a fool's coat, ran amongst them crying "shovels and spades." Everybody knew what was meant. In an incredibly short time the whole population of the city was outside the walls, armed with shovels and spades. Then the ditches were filled in, and the hedges cut down, and the fields laid open again. The King's Council, hearing of the tumult, sent for the Mayor to know the reason of the disturbance, but the movement was too popular for any adverse violence to be used.

The Government could not well interfere, as these enclosures were really contrary to law. A commission had been appointed in 1517 to enquire into this question, and on its report the following year Cardinal Wolsey had issued a decree ordering the inclosers to pull down and lay abroad all enclosures made since the Statute of Henry VII. in 1485. It was two hundred years more before enclosures became legalized; until then they were all contrary to the law of the land.

The Rise in the Price of Provisions.

Within a few years the purchasing power of money had gone down to one third; in other words, sellers required three of these new shillings for what one of the old ones would have bought.

To illustrate how this would affect all workers who depended upon weekly wages, we might imagine a labourer's balance sheet for the food he would require for his wife, children and himself.

Before the rise in prices, about 1500:

Week's wages		7 Loaves Bread	½d.	0	3½
7 days at 4d.	2 4	1 lb. Butter	1d.	0	1
		3 lbs. Cheese	½d.	0	1½
		4 lbs. Meat	¼d.	0	1
		4 gallons Beer	½d.	0	2
		Rent and Fuel		0	3
		Balance		1	4
	2 4			2	4

Now out of this balance of 1s. 4d., of course clothes and sundries would have to be found, but if the labourer wanted he could buy four pigs at 4d. each, or if he wanted to salt beef down for the winter he could buy 64 lbs at ¼d. a lb.

After the rise in prices, about 1550:

Week's wages		7 Loaves Bread	1½d.	0	10½
7 days at 6d.	3 6	1 lb. Butter	3d.	0	3
		3 lbs. Cheese	1½d.	0	4½
		4 lbs Meat	¾d.	0	3
		4 gallons Beer	1½d.	0	6
		Rent and Fuel		0	9
		Balance		0	6
	3 6			3	6

He could thus only save 8 lbs. of beef, or one-eighth the amount he could previously have done.

The Commonweal of England.

Not only did food advance in price, but all other articles rose in value through the depreciation of the currency. A remarkable book evidently written in 1549, during Edwards VI. reign, entitled : "A Discourse of the Commonweal of the Realm of England," tells us some of the changes which had taken place. Altering the wording to modern English, we read : "So the artificers, as cappers, clothiers, shoemakers, and farriers, have respect large enough in selling their wares to the price of victual, wool and iron which they buy. I have seen a cap for 14d. as good as I can now get for 2s. 6d., of cloth ye have heard how the price is risen. Then a pair of shoes costeth me 12d. now, that I have in my day bought a better for 6d. Then I can get never a horse shod under 10d. or 12d., where I have seen the common price was 6d. for shoeing a horse round, yea 8d. of the most till now." The writer goes on to shew that the men who feel the pinch are "the common labourers at 6d. the day, and serving men at 40s. the year."

In another place he says : "Within these 30 years, I could buy the best pig or goose that I could lay my hand on for 4d., which now costeth 12d. A chicken for a penny, a hen for 2d., which now costeth me double and triple the money."

This book may possibly have been written by Bishop Latimer, but whoever wrote it had remarkably clear ideas upon Free Trade and similar subjects. He recommends the encouragement of tillage by the removal of restriction from the sale of corn, the weaving of cloth in England, and the reform of the currency.

Execution of the Duke of Somerset.

Henry the VIII. passed away, but the evil results of his profligacy and extravagance lived after him. His young son succeeded him as Edward the VI., but most of the power was put in the hands of the Duke of Somerset as Protector. He pitied the peasantry who were being so shamefully despoiled, and on his own authority had issued a proclamation demanding "that they who had enclosed any lands, accustomed to lie open, should, upon a certain pain, before a day assigned, lay them open again." We are not surprised to learn that this proclamation "highly incensed the offenders."

He then determined to appoint an extraordinary Commission to inquire into these questions:

The question of decayed towns,—of houses of husbandry pulled down through inclosures,—of pasture turned into tillage,—of the excessive fines and raising of rents, &c., &c.

The landlords of England were too powerful even for the Duke of Somerset, and the Lord Protector was imprisoned, tried and executed mainly if not solely for his defence of the poor people of our native land.

Three of the counts of indictment run thus:

1.—You caused a proclamation to be made concerning enclosures, whereby the common people have made divers insurrections, and levied open war, and spoiled divers of the King's subjects, &c.

2.—Also you caused a Commission to be made out concerning inclosing of commons, decaying cottages, &c.

3.—Also you said that the Lords of Parliament were loth to incline themselves to reformation of enclosures, &c.

The common people loved him in return for his sympathy and service, and at his execution they wept aloud as he called them his "dearly beloved friends."

The Labourer's Rise under Captain Kett, 1549.

Although the difficulties and the labours of the Duke of Somerset's Commission were very great, yet no good result followed. John Hales introduced three Bills into Parliament to curtail the power of the landlords, but they were all rejected. As Hales said, "the sheep were entrusted to the care of the wolf."

The poor people were bitterly disappointed at the failure of the Commission, and there was a large gathering at Wymondham in Norfolk, where the grievances were discussed. There was the peasant, whose pigs, and cow and poultry had been sold, or had died because the commons were gone where they had fed; the yeoman dispossessed of his farm; the farm servant out of employment, because where ten ploughs had turned the soil, one shepherd now watched the grazing of the flocks; the artizan smarting under famine prices, which the change of culture had brought with it. All these were united in suffering, while the gentlemen were doubling, and trebling their incomes with their sheep farms.

It is not to be wondered at that the people rose in revolt, and that some sixteen thousand of them formed a camp near Norwich, from which they scoured the country round, destroying enclosures and levelling fences. Robert Kett, a wealthy tanner, became their leader, and had regular Council meetings under an oak tree called the Tree of Reformation. The King sent an herald with an offer of pardon, but Kett told his men "Pardons were for traitors, not for innocent and just men." Neighbouring clergymen came regularly to join the men in Common Prayer under the oak tree, and Kett asserted his authority in keeping perfect order amongst his followers.

The Assault on the City of Norwich.

Kett's power increased so much that Lord Northampton, with a force of horsemen, and a band of Italian mercenaries, were sent into Norfolk to suppress the rebellion. The rebels at midnight attacked the city of Norwich, and after desperate fighting were repulsed with a loss of 300 men. Next day a herald was sent with an offer of pardon which they refused. They renewed the attack and entered the city, where many conflicts took place. Lord Sheffield being slain, Lord Northampton retreated from the city and returned to London.

Then the Earl of Warwick arrived with his army of lords, knights, squires and gentlemen. Norwich was summoned to surrender, and the Earl assaulted the city, driving out the countrymen with great slaughter on both sides. The insurgents again attacked the city, and took some of the pieces of the King's artillery, which they turned against the city and blew down some of its walls. The Earl of Warwick was in great straits, but was saved by the arrival of German and Italian soldiers, who were hired for the occasion.

A few days later a pitched battle was fought, when after severe fighting the insurgents were put to flight, and Captain Kett had to gallop away. Robert Kett and his brother William both were captured, and were hanged in chains as felons. The fires of revolt were quenched in blood, the poor husbandmen who had risen in defence of their homes were slaughtered like sheep, and in this one year 1549 it is computed 10,000 brave Englishmen thus died by the arms of foreigners, at the bidding of the new aristocracy of England.

Bernard Gilpin's Sermon before Edward VI.

It has been the custom for centuries to denounce these ignorant countrymen who revolted under the unjust tyranny of the aristocracy, as traitors and scoundrels. Yet, there was not wanting some to point out the iniquity of the landlords, or to plead the cause of the poor.

Bernard Gilpin in preaching before Edward VI. in 1552 rose to the occasion :

"Be the poor man's cause never so manifest, the rich shall for money find six or seven Councillors that shall stand with subtleties and sophisms to cloak an evil matter and hide a known truth. Such boldness have the coveteous cormorants that now their robberies, extortion and open oppression, have no end or limits. No banks can keep in their violence. As for turning poor men out of their holdings, they take it for no offence, but say their land is their own, and they turn them out of their shrouds like mice. Thousands in England, through such, beg now from door to door, which once kept honest houses. . . . . Poor men are daily hunted out of their livings, there is no covert or den can keep them safe. They have such quick smelling hounds, they can lie in London, and turn men out of their farms and tenements, an hundred, some two hundred miles off. When wicked Ahab hunted after Naboth's vineyard he could not, though he were a King, obtain that prey until cursed Jezebel took the matter in hand, so hard a thing it was then, to wring a poor man from his fathers inheritance, which now a mean man will take in hand."

The young King had "strong meat" that day, but it is to be feared that all preachers before Royalty have not been equally faithful.

The Prayer for Landlords.

The official prayer in the Church prayer book of Edward the VI., authorised for use in all Churches, was hardly less strong:

"We heartily pray Thee to send Thy Holy Spirit into the hearts of them that possess the grounds and pastures of the earth, that they, remembering themselves to be Thy tenants, may not rack or stretch out the rents of their houses or lands, nor yet take unreasonable fines or monies, after the manner of coveteous worldings, but to so let them out that the inhabitants thereof may be able to pay the rents, and to live and assist their families and remember the poor. Give them grace also to consider that they are but strangers and pilgrims in this world, having here no dwelling place but seeking one to come; that they remembering the short continuance of this life, may be content with that which is sufficient, and not to join house to house or land to land to the impoverishment of others, but to so behave themselves in letting their tenements, lands and pastures, that after this life they may be received into everlasting habitations."

It would be interesting to know as to how it is that the prayer does not seem to have been answered either in the reign of Edward the VI. or since. Perhaps Cabinet Ministers did not keep awake through the prayers, for Froude the historian estimated that the Ministers of the Crown and their friends had appropriated (I suppose, says he, I must not say stolen) estates worth in modern currency about five million sterling, and divided them between themselves.

The Punishment of Three Days' Idleness.

Very early in Edward VI. reign Parliament had expressed itself strongly against idleness and vagabondrie. The new Act certainly did not err on the side of mercy, as previous Acts were supposed to have done.

"That if any man or woman, able to work, should refuse to labour and live idly for three days, that he or she should be branded with a red hot iron on the breast with the letter V, and be adjudged a slave for two years, of any person who should inform against such idler."

The master was directed "to feed his slave with bread and water and such refuse meat as he should think proper, and to cause his slave to work by beating, chaining or otherwise, in such work (however vile it be) as he should put him unto."

Masters were empowered "to sell, bequeath or let out on hire the services of their slaves," and they might "put a ring of iron about the neck, arm or leg of the slave for the more knowledge or surety of the keeping of him."

If a slave ran away from his master for fourteen days, he was to be branded on the cheek, and become a slave for life. If he ran away a second time, he, when caught, "was to suffer pains of death, as other felons ought to do."

Magistrates had power given them "to look out for persons who had been idle for three days, brand them with a V on the breast, and to send them to the place of their birth, there to be kept in chains or otherwise, in amending highways or other service."

This infamous Act of Parliament was passed about 1549, after the Reformation, and under a Protestant King, less than 360 years ago.

Queen Elizabeth and Cottage Building.

We have seen how the year 1500, in the reign of Henry the VII., marks a high water line in the prosperity of the English labourer. For about one hundred years the decline was very rapid towards beggary and starvation. During Queen Elizabeth's reign however, 1559 to 1603, this decline was for a while stayed. When she came to the throne there were hosts of "broken men" and gangs of "sturdy beggars," who held whole counties in terror. The terrible work of repression was going pitilessly on, and wholesale massacre of these disposed tenants was being indulged in by the country gentry. We find the magistrates of Somersetshire capturing a gang of a hundred at a stroke, hanging fifty at once on the gallows, and then complaining bitterly to the Government of the necessity of waiting until the Assizes before they could enjoy the spectacle of the fifty others hanging beside them.

Elizabeth, however, wisely encouraged better farming and the employ of more labourers upon the land. By the 31st Act of her reign, no one was allowed in rural districts "to build any manner of cottage or dwelling unless the same person do assign and lay to the same cottage or building four acres of ground at the least. Anyone building a cottage without this provision shall be fined forty shillings for every month the cottage is so continued."

She was thus justifying her words at the opening of her first Parliament: "I have desired to have the obedience of my subjects by love, and not by compulsion."

Rise of the English Poor Law System.

The legislation of Elizabeth's reign went however much further in attempting to relieve the distress which existed among the poor people, and established the basis of our present poor law system.

In Edward the Sixth's reign a law had been passed appointing two collectors for each parish, who were to call upon every person of substance and enquire how much he would give weekly towards the poor. These promises were to be entered in a book, and the collectors of this charity were to employ the poor in useful labour, and pay them from the funds collected. Those who did not pay were to be denounced to the Bishop. In Elizabeth's reign this denunciation was evidently not sufficient to bring in the requisite cash, for she ordered that those unwilling to give were to be summoned before two justices, who were empowered to commit them to prison until the poor rate was paid.

Several Acts of Parliament, which asserted the liability of the rich for the maintenance of the poor, were passed during the long reign of this Queen. Every parish was obliged to provide for the housing and feeding of the lame, the impotent, the old and the blind, and also to put to work all persons using no ordinary and daily trade in life to get their living by.

By the 18th Elizabeth, the Justices in every county were empowered to either purchase or hire buildings for houses of correction, and to provide a sufficient stock of wool, hemp, flax, iron or stuff, that "youth might be brought up in labour, and not like to grow idle rogues." The keepers were authorised to supply poor persons with materials for work, and to pay them for their labour.

How Queen Elizabeth served Beggars.

An Act of Parliament of 1512 informs us that there were at that time over 60,000 prisoners for debt in the wretched gaols of the Kingdom, and one old historian assures us that King Henry VIII. executed his laws with such severity that 72,000 "great and petty thieves were put to death during his reign. He adds that even during Elizabeth's reign "rogues were trussed up apace, and that there was not one year commonly wherein 300 or 400 of them were not devoured and eaten up by the gallows in one place or another."

The punishment for begging was "grievous whipping," and the burning through the gristle of the right ear for the first offence. This law however was modified, and by a subsequent law the offender was ordered "to be stripped naked from the middle upwards and to be whipped until his body was bloody. He was then to be sent to the place of his birth."

He was however entitled to ask the magistrates for a testimonial of whipping. One of these in the British Museum is headed: "How vayliant beggers ought to be punyshed according to Kinge's statute." On the other hand the magistrates demanded a receipt from the beggar, both of his whipping and of his testimonial thereof.

To prevent doubt as to who were "rogues and vagabonds," they were strictly defined. Amongst other classes we read: "Idle persons using subtle, crafty and unlawful games and plays. Pretenders to palmistry, physiognomy, and fortune telling. Those who refuse to work for reasonable wages. Minstrels not in the service of a Baron of the realm, jugglers, pedlars, tinkers and petty chapmen, scholars begging without licence, and shipmen pretending losses at sea."

Queen Elizabeth and London.

In 1580 Queen Elizabeth issued a proclamation against the building of new houses and the further increase of London. It is worth quoting as shewing her care for the poor.

"To the preservation of her people in health which may seem impossible to continue, though presently by God's goodness the same is perceived to be in better estate universally than has been in man's memorie. Yet when there are such great multitudes of people brought to inhabite in small roomes, whereof a great part are seene very poore, yea, such as live a life of begging, or by worse means, and they heaped up together, and in a sort smothered with many families of children and servants in one house, it must needs follow, if any plague or popular sickness should by God's permission enter amongst those multitudes, that the same would not only spread itself and invade the whole citie and confines, but that a great mortalitie would ensue the same where Her Majesties personal presence is many times required. For remedie whereof . . . Her Majestie . . . . doth charge and straightly command all manner of persons to desist and forbeare from any new buildings of any house or tenement within three miles from any of the gates of the sayde citie of London, to serve for habitation or lodging for any person; and also to forbear from letting or setting any more families than one onely to be placed in any one house."

London at this time contained 160,000 inhabitants. In 1595 the Lord Mayor had the "poor householders" counted, and found there were 4,132, but we do not know whether it was that number of families or persons.

New Occupations found for Labour.

In this reign of Queen Elizabeth there were three great forces at work, tending to diminish the evil that was being caused through the land-grabbing of the gentry, by absorbing a large part of the surplus labour thus driven off the land.

First, new systems of agriculture were introduced, which were said to double the yield which had been previously obtained. This caused a greater number of labourers to be required on the farms, and drew back some of the men who had been discharged.

Secondly, the growth of English commerce, seafaring and adventure. Up to this reign, three hundred years ago, most of the shipping which came even to English ports had belonged to continental merchants; under Elizabeth, English sailors made their way to all parts of the globe, and began that rapid career of development which have made us the carriers of the world. The fisheries of the channel provided occupation to the inhabitants of the South and Eastern Coast, and gave men a longing for a seafaring life. Many thousands must thus have been attracted from the agricultural life they had been born in, to try their fortunes upon the sea, or in some of the wonderful lands beyond its tides.

Thirdly, the first Industrial Revolution, the commencement of domestic or hand manufacture. The spinning of yarn, the weaving, fulling, and dyeing of cloth, the digging for iron and coal, the making of earthenware, and many other industries were being started. All these required labour, and the land starved labourer found a demand for his services, in some new centre of activity near to where he had been living.

Laws for the Regulation of Industry.

Before this reign of Queen Elizabeth, whatever manufacturers there were had been principally controlled by the Trade Guilds, but the Government had been gradually trying to regulate and supervise all forms of industry. Now many new laws were passed for the making of pins, friezes, cottons, iron gads, and many other articles. The coopers, the tanners, the weavers, the saddlers and men of other occupations, found their work and their charges arranged for them. Especially by means of an Act called the Statute of Apprentices, passed in 1563. This important Act remained law 250 years, being only repealed in 1813. It made the duty of labour compulsory, and ordered the justices of the peace to meet once a year in each locality to establish wages for each kind of industry. It required a seven years' apprenticeship for each person coming into a trade, a working day of twelve hours in summer and all daylight in winter, and that all engagements, excepting piece work, were to be by the year, with six months' notice to be given either by employer or employed.

Then the locality for the carrying on of various trades was strictly defined. The manufacture of rope was forforbidden in Dorsetshire, excepting in the town of Bridport. The making of cloth in the towns and villages of Worcestershire, excepting in five towns, was prohibited. Coverlets were not to be made in Yorkshire outside the city of York. On the other hand, the making and wearing of English manufactures was encouraged, and it was an offence for an Englishman to wear anything else on his head for Sundays and holidays than an English cloth cap.

The Protestant Weavers.

One striking illustration of the connection between religious and industrial history, is afforded by the influence upon the manufactures of England of the Protestant foreign artizans, who settled in this country in Queen Elizabeth's reign. In 1561 some twenty families driven from the Netherlands on account of their religion came to the town of Sandwich and started the weaving of various kinds of new cloths. Four years later some thirty Dutch families settled in Norwich as weavers, and to Maidstone a body of artizans who were threadmakers came. These having found protection in Protestant England, a great number of French Huguenots, principally silk weavers, came over and were allowed to settle in London, Canterbury and Coventry. The renewed persecution after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 sent many thousands more into exile, and large numbers came over to England. They brought with them their skill in the manufacture of paper, glass, clocks and metal goods, and although they were for awhile opposed by the populace, they found employment for great numbers of English people. They caused the names of Protestant and weaver to become almost interchangeable terms.

Until they came English wool had been almost all sold on the continent, and then bought back again in the shape of cloth; but these men so improved English weaving that the export of wool almost ceased, and its place was taken by the sale of the finished cloth. It is to them that we owe the fine kersies, the bombazines, the bays and says and the other "new draperies" of Elizabeth's reign.

The Domestic System of Manufacture.

The influence of the Trade Guilds had been keeping the people engaged in any industry within certain specified towns, now an enormous number of small manufacturers sprang up. They generally combined a little farming with a little weaving or iron work. Having two or more men working for them, they filled up all spare time upon the soil. The raw materials they required were generally bought from the merchant or dealer who bought the finished articles when they were ready. These miniature factories were generally in country places to escape the restrictions of the Trade Guilds, and were very often by streams to get the advantage of easy transit. Even after the export of English cotton and woollen goods to America had made progress, these goods were still spun, carded and woven in the scattered cottages of the North and West of England.

One of the first changes came from the inventive brain of a young clergyman. In 1589 William Lee, a curate at Calverton, sat watching his young wife nursing their child and knitting stockings to eke out their scanty livelihood. He watched her fingers, and thought of the possibility of making a machine or frame that would do the same kind of work. When he had succeeded in making a practical knitting machine he submitted it to Queen Elizabeth, hoping for Royal patronage. She refused however to countenance it, because of the number of poor people she expected would be thrown out of work by its use, and Lee carried it to the Court of France. After his death his workmen were persecuted and returned to Nottingham, where they became the originators of the hosiery and lace industries of the Midland counties.

Captain Pouch Defeated.

After the death of Queen Elizabeth only four years elapsed before evictions and enclosures began again. In 1607 when the lands of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators had been confiscated, the new owners took to fresh enclosures. This caused the "common people" to assemble in Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and Leicestershire, breaking down hedges and laying open all new enclosures of commons which used to be tillage. We read that there were at two places about 8,000 men, women and children, and that they only had bills and pikes and such like tools for their work. They did no violence, and evidently had the sympathy of the neighbouring inhabitants, for they sent them many carts stored with victuals, spades and shovels.

They found a leader in John Reynolds, who was nicknamed Captain Pouch, because he wore a great leather pouch in which he told the people was a spell which would ensure them against harm, if only they abstained from all swearing and violence. These levellers were of opinion that 380 towns in England were decayed and depopulated through these evictions and enclosures. It was a critical time, for many of the yeomanry sympathised with the labourers and were willing to aid them in recovering their ancient rights. The King sent several lords with a considerable force of soldiers, who were very backward at charging on to their fellow countrymen. The great lords with their servants came on them, and were met with staffs, long bows and stones. Of course the "rebels" were defeated with great slaughter. Captain Pouch was hung, drawn and quartered, but his men were "only hung."

Poverty during the Commonwealth.

These labourers were neither felons nor traitors, they were simply Englishmen trying to enforce the law of the land, which condemned enclosures, but supported the aristocracy who defied the law.

James the first died, his son Charles came to the throne, and the awful struggle known as the great Civil War raged throughout the land. The fighting however made comparatively little difference to the labourer's condition. Charles the First was executed as a tyrant and traitor, Cromwell became Lord Protector of the land, and yet the poor landless peasantry of England starved.

We read in the *Moderate Intelligencer* "that hundreds of thousands in England have a livelihood which gives them food in the summer and little or none in the winter; that a third part of the people in most of the parishes stand in need of relief, that thousands of families have no work, and those who have, can earn bread only. There are many thousands near to this city of London who have no other sustainance but beer meals—neither roots or other necessities are they able to buy, and of meal not sufficient."

It was brought before the House of Commons that labour is cheaper, and food twice dearer than formerly. Colonel Rainborough told his fellow officers: "The poorest he that is in England has a life to live as the greatest he. The rich can help themselves . . . the wealth and strength of all countries are in the poor, for they do all the great necessary works, and they make up the strength of armies."

Winstanley, the Digger.

The best known of these levellers was Lieut. Colonel John Lilburne, who sympathised with the poor who were thus being driven off their common lands by these lords of the soil.

They had no quarrel with the rights of property or to steal other people's lands, they only wanted the restoration of their own rights of common pasture and tillage. "England," they said, "is not a free people till the poor that have no land have a free allowance to dig and labour the commons, and so live as comfortably as the landlords that live in their enclosures."

Gerrard Winstanley led them to some waste land on St. George's Hill, in Surrey, in the year 1649, and as these poor men digged they sang:

Stand up now, diggers all!
The gentry are all around, stand up now!
The gentry are all around, on each side they are found,
Their wisdoms so profound, to cheat us of our ground.
Stand up now, stand up now!

The clergy they come in, stand up now;
The clergy they come in, and say it is a sin,
That we should now begin, our freedom for to win.
Stand up now, diggers all,

To conquer them by love, come in now;
To conquer them by love, as it does you behove,
For He is King above; no power is like to love,
Glory here, diggers all.

Oliver Cromwell, who was then master of the country, sent Lilburne to the Tower of London, shot down the poor diggers at Burford Churchyard, as if they had been traitors, and then piously thanked God for a great deliverance,.

The Polite Art of Beggar-making.

There were many pamphlets written during the so called "Commonwealth" on this subject of the unemployed. One of them is called "The Crying Sin of England of not caring for the Poor," by J. Moore, Minister of Knaptoft, in Leicestershire, 1653. He says in it: "But how great a shame it is for a Gospel Magistracie not to suppress make-beggars, which make such swarms of beggars in countries, cities and towns. . . . I mean the unsociable, covetous, cruel, broode of those wretches that by their inclosure do unpeople towns and uncorn fields. . . Question many of our beggars that go from dore to dore, with wife and children after them, where they dwell, and why they go a begging. Alas master, say they, we were forced out of such a town when it was inclosed, and since we have continued a generation of beggars. . . . They make four sorts of beggars. The tenant, the cottier, the children of both, and all who stand in their (the landlords) way. . . . One of the inhabitants gave this reason why they must do it. The poor increase like fleas and lice, and these vermin will eat us up unless we inclose. . . . They usually upon inclosure treble the price of their land, and this they get by flaying the skin off the poor."

There was a strong belief that the third generation of land robbers died out, and so fearful were many land grabbers of the vengeance of God that when they signed the document to inclose, they signed with their signatures in a circle, so that no man might appear to sign first.

The Taxing of the Poor Man's Beer.

Great as had been the oppression of the workers, a greater and more oppressive change was yet to come. This was the introduction of indirect taxation. Originally all taxation had been direct and was levied by the King upon the holders of land, or landlords. The feudal rights of taxation and of authority over all young heirs and heiresses were valuable to Royalty, and at the Restoration, when Charles the Second came to the throne, he compounded all these various rights for a sum of £100,000 a year. It was proposed to raise this sum by a tax upon the land, which was thus freed from irksome feudal exactions, but the landowning Parliament ordered it to be met by a general excise. In plain language this means that all the enormous beer and tobacco duties, with other customs, which are mostly paid by working people, and which last year amounted to seventy millions, came from the earned incomes instead of coming from the landowners wealth.

The elder Pitt, when speaking in the House of Lords against the proposal to raise the Income Tax to 7d. in the £, declared it would cause a revolution. "But," he added, "you can get the money by an easier method. By the method of indirect taxation, you can tax the last rag off a man's back, the last mouthful of food from his mouth, and he wont know what is injuring him; he may grumble about hard times, but he will not know that the hard times have been produced by taxation."

Indirect taxation was therefore the next great cause of poverty in England.

The Law of Settlement.

One of the most disastrous Acts of Parliament that was ever passed was in the year 1662, during the reign of Charles II. Ever since the establishment of a Poor Law system, the poor had been directed "to repair to the place of their birth, and to be maintained there," but farm labourers under Elizabeth's legislation had been allowed to move about in search of work so long as they had testimonials from their late employer and two householders, specifying their lawful departure.

By the 13th and 14th Acts of Charles II. however it was enacted that the period of residence needful to procure a settlement should be reduced to 40 days, and made it lawful for any two Justices to remove any new comer to the parish where he was last legally settled, unless he either rented a tenement of £10 a year or gave such security as the Justices should deem sufficient. Historians say that this short clause has been more profitable to the lawyers than any other point in English law; causing, it is believed, millions to be spent (at the expense of poor ratepayers) in determining to which parish the poor were chargeable.

It is impossible to express the evil consequences of this Act. The poor became serfs, who could not move about in search of better paid employment, or in any way to attempt to better their forlorn condition. If a shoemaker even moved into the next village, any trade rival could get two magistrates to certify and get the new comer arrested and deported to the village where he was born. Whatever opportunities there might be of work, within a few miles of their homes, labourers were terrorised into remaining with their old masters, and to be content with their old pittance.

Wholesale Enclosure Commences.

Up to about the year 1710 all the various inclosures which had taken place had been contrary to the law of the land. What amount had been thus taken from the common people it is impossible to say, but in 1710 there were still millions of acres left uninclosed, and which afforded livelihood for a multitude of small yeoman farmers. But from then, instead of being robbed against the law they were robbed by the law.

The landowners went to Parliament (and as Parliament was composed of landowners) they easily obtained Inclosure Acts, to inclose whatever land they desired.

In the first Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture it is stated that from 1710 to 1867, 7,660,439 acres were enclosed. This is about one third of the cultivateable land of this country.

From the year 1727 to 1845, in only 118 years there were 1,385 separate Acts of Parliament to authorise enclosures, from 1727 to 1800 they were very rapid, and from then increased at still greater speed. In 1801 a general Enclosure Act was passed to lessen the trouble of the landowners in getting so many Acts of Parliament through.

These enclosures were not always evil, there were some lands thus brought into cultivation which might not otherwise have been utilized. Again, in some instances, labourers and cottagers were compensated, and receiving some of the enclosed land were no worse off for the change, but in the majority of cases they appear to have suffered heavy loss.

How Enclosure Acts were obtained.

The methods whereby these Acts of Parliament were obtained is well described in a tract written in 1786 by a country farmer.

"To obtain an Act of Parliament to inclose a common field, two witnesses are produced, to swear that the lands thereof in their present state are not worth occupying, though at the same time they are lands of the best soil in the Kingdom, and can produce corn in the greatest abundance and of the best quality. And by inclosing such lands they are generally prevented from producing any corn at all, as the landowner converts twenty small farms into four large ones. The tenants are tied down in their leases not to plough. . . Several hundred villages that forty years ago contained between four to five hundred inhabitants, very few will now be found to exceed eighty, and some not half that number; nay, some contain only one poor decrepid old man or woman, housed by the occupiers of lands who live in another parish to prevent their being obliged to pay towards the support of the poor who live in the next parish."

This country farmer expresses his opinion upon his companions. "Their entertainments are as expensive as they are elegant, for it is no uncommon thing for one of these new created farmers to spend ten or twelve pounds at one entertainment; and to wash down delicate food must have the most expensive wines, and to set off the entertainment in the greatest splendour an elegant side-board of plate is provided in the newest fashion."

The Decrease of Production by Enclosure.

This country farmer gives us the accounts of the same parish before and after enclosure.

About 1746, before enclosure:

Rent ...	1137	17	0	1100 qrs. wheat, 28s.	1540	0	0
42 cottagers				1200 ,, barley, 16s.	960	0	0
20 small farms				900 ,, beans, 15s.	675	0	0
20 larger farms				250 todds wool, 16s.	200	0	0
82 households				600 lambs, 10s.	300	0	0
average each				5000 lbs. cheese, 1½d.	31	5	0
£36 2s. 8d.				6000 ,, butter, 5d.	125	0	0
	2963	8	0	100 calves, 20s.	100	0	0
				150 pigs 12s.	90	0	0
				Poultry and eggs	80	0	0
	£4101	5	0		£4101	5	0

About 1786, after enclosure:

				Fat beasts ...	960	0	0
Rent ...	1801	2	2	Sheep and lambs ...	760	0	0
Wages, men	100	0	0	Calves ...	165	0	0
,, women	144	0	0	Wool ...	235	0	0
				Butter ...	190	0	0
Four farmers,				Cheese ...	100	0	0
each £153	614	17	10	Horses ...	250	0	0
	£2660	0	0		£2660	0	0

Thus the landlord obtained £663 more rent, which was highly satisfactory. Four farmers at least doubled if not trebled their incomes, and if seventy eight households were driven off into penury out of this one parish, it was nobody's business and nobody cared.

Mark, however, that the produce of the parish being £1441 less in value through enclosure, there was £1441 less from this parish for the support of the nation. A wicked waste of a nation's food.

Nothing Increased but the Poor.

The foregoing illustration is only that of one parish, but it has to be multiplied a thousand fold to see its evil effect upon this country. In the Board of Agriculture's Report, 1808, there are significant replies from country districts. Gloucester: "Nothing increased but the poor. Eight farmhouses filled with them." Bucks: "Milk to be had at 1d. a quart before. Not to be had now at any price." Northamptonshire: "The poor deprived of their cows, and great sufferers by the loss of their hogs." Berkshire: "The poor can no longer keep a cow, and they are therefore maintained by the parish."

Mr. Forster, of Norwich, a professional Enclosure Commissioner, lamented that "he had injured 2,000 poor people at the rate of 20 a parish."

Truly the old English proverbs have proved themselves. "Inclosures make fat beasts and lean poor people." "Horn and thorn shall make England forlorn."

A writer named John Cowper in 1732, after describing how villages of 120 farmers or cottagers have in a few years been reduced to four or two houses, gives us the yield per acre of land under corn or grass.

Under corn, before enclosure:

Wages	2	10	0	20 bushels of corn		
Rent to landlord	0	6	8	at 3s. per bush.	3	0	0
Farmer's profit...	0	3	4				
	3	0	0		3	0	0

Under grass, after enclosure:

Rent to landlord	0	13	4	Partial fattening		
Farmer's profit...	0	11	8	of one bullock	1	5	0
	1	5	0		1	5	0

The Golden Age of the English Farmer.

If the year 1500 was the noontide of the English peasant, the year 1760, when George III. came to the throne, marks the noon of the English farmer.

Although the farmer's rent had gone up twentyfold, from 6d. to 10s. per acre, and his wages bill had gone up threefold, yet the selling price of his produce having gone up tenfold, he was an enormous gainer by the change.

Supposed balance sheet of a farmer in 1500:

	£		£
Rent of 400 acres at 6d.	10	Sale of Produce ...	80
Rates and Taxes ...	0		
Wages, 10 labourers, 2/4	60		
Food for his family ...	4		
Repairs and renewals ...	6		
	80		80

Supposed balance sheet of a farmer about 1760:

	£		£
Rent of 400 acres, at 10/-	200	Sale of Produce ...	800
Rates and Taxes, at 8/-	80		
Wages, 10 labourers, 7/-	182		
Food for his family ...	40		
Repairs and renewals ...	30		
Profit	268		
	800		800

Now it is evident that if wages had gone up tenfold, the same as farm produce, the farmer could neither have paid more than £100 rent or have made any profit for himself. It was by paying £418 less than tenfold wages that he could well afford to pay twentyfold rent.

This is however on the supposition that the same number of labourers were employed, whereas we know that their number was being rapidly decreased, and the fewer the labourers the greater the profit left for the farmer and the landowner.

How Landlords Saved Fortunes.

The difference between the income of a landowner in 1500 and one in 1760 is very great, but is greater than it appears at first sight. Imagine an estate of 4,000 acres. In 1500 the rent at 6d. per acre would produce an income of £100 a year. The expenditure upon food, servants, clothing and household expenses, we may put at £80 a year, leaving a balance of £20 for saving. Two hundred and sixty years afterwards the estate at 10s. per acre brings in £2,000. Now to live in the same style as his ancestor the landowner needs to spend five times as much. His food, servants, clothing and household expenses therefore cost £400. This leaves a balance of £1,600, instead of the £20 his ancestor could save. Of course landowners did not confine themselves to the same style of living as their forefathers, and in their extravagance wasted what was deducted by the farmers from the labourer's pittance.

There was however a new class arising among the English people. During the previous century a large number of fortunes had been made by trade and commerce, and the men who had thus gained their wealth strove for a higher social position by buying land in large quantities. Then agriculture became looked upon as a fashionable undertaking, and all kinds of new methods were adopted. Arthur Young, who travelled throughout the country about 1772, continually urged the landowners to raise their tenants rents, in order to force them to make use of improved methods. He was well aware that there was much wretchedness among the labourers, but had little pity to spare for their distress.

A Labourer's Hire in George III. Day.

Wages can only really be estimated in terms of food. In the year 1500 a week's work would keep a married agricultural labourer with his wife and children in food for four weeks. A hundred years afterwards a week's work would only buy food for two weeks, and in 1760 the week's work only for nine days.

Reckoned in corn, in 1500 a day's work would buy 28 lbs. of corn, in 1688 8 lbs of corn, in 1760 only 5 lbs. of corn.

Taking the same amount of provisions as necessary for a family as were reckoned in 1500 at the 1760 prices.

	s.	d.		s	d.
Ordinary Wages, seven days' work	7	0	7 Loaves Bread, 5d....	2	11
			1 lb. Butter, 6d. ...	0	6
			3 ,, Cheese. 4d. ...	1	0
			4 ,, Meat, 4d. ...	1	4
			Rent, fuel, &c. ...	1	3
	7	0		7	0

This reckons nothing for beer, which was now out of his reach if he bought the same amount of food.

That the sum of 7s. per week for a labourer was a fair average of the country the following return of wages in 1795 will shew. This return however includes the work of the wife and children. Carlisle 10s., Hunts. 9s. 3d., Herts 12s. 6d., Leicester 13s. 9d., Lindsey 10s., Norfolk 11s. 3d., Northants 10s. 7d., Oxfordshire 12s. 10d., Suffolk 15s. 1d., Somerset 8s. 10d., Yorkshire 7s. 3d., Bedfordshire 11s. 9d. The average of this is 11s. 1d., for at least three persons' work for a week.

William Howitt, in describing the abject poverty of the labourers, says that he asked an old man who was "daundering about" why the place was so forlorn. "O," said he, "We once could run our cows on the waste and did very well, but that is taken away. Sir James asked the steward what the poor people must do. "Oh, they will all hooly away," said he, "but where are we to hooly to"?

The Abuse of the Old Poor Law.

Queen Elizabeth's Poor Law system was an honest attempt to stem the tide of pauperism that was caused by the landowner's greed, but after it had been in operation about a hundred years it became very much abused. Under the Act of Apprentices the Magistrates still met to fix the price of labour, and to regulate employment. Outdoor relief for the unemployed was largely given, although the idea of setting the poor to work had been practically abandoned. The Overseers of each parish kept a sharp look out to prevent peasants coming from any other parish, and used to caution the landowners not to let them a small holding for fear of their becoming paupers in their parish. Farmers were bidden not to employ labouring men and women sufficiently long as would enable them to claim a settlement, and to pick a quarrel with them before their years end. As the labourers could not possibly live upon the wages they received, the Magistrates of Berks issued tables, shewing what they considered these men ought to get either from their employers or the parish, and the Overseers were bidden to enquire the wages and the price of bread, and then make up the poor relief accordingly. When the gallon loaf (or half stone) was 1s., an unmarried labourer was to receive 3s. a week, and a married labourer with one child 6s., if he had five children 12s., and if seven 15s. Should the loaf rise to 1s. 6d., the unmarried man was to get 4s. 3d., while the married with seven children were to receive 20s. 3d. Thus the idle and thriftless ones were put on the same level as the sober and industrious. The farmers naturally reduced the labourers wages, so that the men could claim the more from the parish.

The Cost of Poor Law Relief.

One of the first evil results of this system of relief was a war against cottages. When estates came into the market, very often the cottages were razed to the ground to drive the poor out of them, and so prevent them being "nests of beggars brats," who might come upon the rates. Thus the country side was made bare, and thousands of happy homes destroyed.

A still worse effect followed. As 2s. per week was allowed for the support of illegitimate children, either from the reputed father or the parish, a girl with three or four was regarded as a prize to be eagerly sought after by drunken scamps. Pauper marriages were common, and plenty of parishes would give any man £2 or £3 who would take a woman off their hands, and so lessen the rates by the cost of her maintenance.

The cost of the system was fabulous. In less than a century the poor rates went up from £730,000 to about seven millions. Hundreds of farms were without tenants, because no one was willing to pay poor rates of 19s. and 20s. in the £. To take one village, Cholesbury, in Buckinghamshire, it had two public houses and 139 inhabitants. The rates rose in 30 years from £10 11s. to £367, and out of the 139 inhabitants 104 became paupers. The landlord gave up his rents, the farmers the farms, the clergyman his glebe and tithes, and it was then proposed to give the village to the poor, and to levy rates in other villages to support them.

When we think how this system destroyed forethought and consideration, when we consider what demoralizing influences their forefathers lived under, it is a marvel that our labouring classes are as industrious and intelligent as they are to-day.

The Beginning of the Factory System.

Whilst these starving thousands were thus being driven into pauperism, a new use was being found for their labour, for the factory system of manufacture was introduced from Italy into this country.

Three brothers named Lombe, about the year 1700, determined to find out how the Italians spun their silk thread. One of them named John went as a spy to try to understand, so that he might copy the machinery. It was an awful risk, for the punishment of discovery was death. First he tried in various disguises, but was unable to follow the rapidly moving wheels. Then he associated with a priest, who was confessor to the owner of the silk mill. Apparently by bribery he induced this priest to aid his deception, and, pretending to be a poor youth, obtained work on the priest's recommendation. Living now in the mill, he spent nights making careful drawings of the machinery, which the priest sent off to England. When an English ship came Lombe went on board, the Italians guessed his deception, and sent a vessel after him. The English ship being the better sailer the adventurer reached this country in safety, and coming to Derby commenced the erection of the first silk factory in England. The Derby Corporation leased him an island on the river Derwent, and whilst the mill was being built lent him the Town Hall to form a temporary factory.

Thus the example of factory building was set, and the employment of young people and children as factory hands began; an Industrial Revolution which changed the face of England, bringing enormous wealth to the manufacturers as well as the landowners, and for a while postponed the full results of the depopulation of rural England.

Spinning and Weaving Machinery.

The English people had for about a century ceased to export their wool, but had spun and woven it in the workers' cottage homes. The greatest difficulty was now experienced in getting sufficient women and children to spin enough by the old fashioned wheels to keep the men employed in weaving. Looms were being gradually improved, so that the weavers wanted quite six spinners each to keep them going. So great was the difficulty that the Royal Society offered a prize for a machine which would spin several threads at once. James Hargreaves caught the idea of having several spindles driven by one wheel, and made a machine to spin eight at once, calling it after his wife, the spinning Jenny. Then Richard Arkwright brought out his spinning machine, and built large Derbyshire mills. Following him came Samuel Crompton, with an adaptation of both Hargreaves and Arkwrights ideas into one spinning machine, nicknamed a mule. Thus the hand weavers were kept supplied, until in 1784 Dr. Edward Cartwright, a clergyman in the South of England, invented the power loom. As he did not patent it, Parliament granted him £10,000 as a gift for his services.

The first result of these inventions was the building of wool and cotton factories suitable for the new machines. These required motive power, and were too large to be worked in cottages like the old spinning wheels and hand-looms. Horse power was tried, and then water power was applied, which of course involved the mills being by the side of streams. Capital had to be brought in to aid in the purchase of this new machinery, but as there were at that time a number of landowners wanting investment, they joined the spinners and weavers to erect their mills.

How the New Factories obtained Hands.

The great change however was in the amount and kind of labour that was now employed. If there had been Trades Unions, and the old spinners and weavers had been transferred at good wages to the new machinery all might have gone well. But this did not take place. The hand loom workers were suspicious of the new fangled things, and if they had been willing to work at all, for these new manufacturers, would have wanted reasonable living wages. This these new millowners were in no mood to grant. Were there not thousands unemployed? Were not the agricultural labourers being driven by poverty and hunger to work for anyone who would find them a crust? Were they not being daily hounded off from their native villages in search of homes? What more natural, than that these new factories should be staffed with the agricultural labourer's children, thus driven from one slavery into another even more appalling.

Children in factories were in no way protected by the law; on the contrary the law authorised the parochial authorities to apprentice the children of the poor to any trade. They had thousands of children on their hands, and they took advantage of the law by sending the children away in waggon loads from London and elsewhere, giving them to these millowners of Yorkshire and Lancashire. These were not orphan children alone, but the children of those who in temporary poverty had asked for poor law relief. The parishes thus getting rid of them to wholesale dealers, parents and children rarely met again, for the lives of these young white slaves were used up without remorse.

How the Factory Children were Treated.

As there was no restrictive legislation, children of six were forced to work fifteen and sixteen hours a day, rarely allowed to sit down, and with but two half hours to eat the scanty food that was allowed them. To prevent having the idiots left upon their hands, the London local authorities made the millowners agree to take one idiot child with every nineteen sane ones. There were several instances of wretches who deliberately murdered their parish apprentices in order to get fresh premiums with new ones. In Derby the children were worked when they were so small that they could not reach the looms without having pieces of wood fastened to their feet, and in one factory the penalty for insufficient work was to be chained by the foot until they learned how to work fast enough to satisfy their tormentors.

When a Bill was brought before Parliament in 1818 to make nine the minimum age and ten hours a day the maximum work, the House of Lords limited its scope and raised the hours of labour to twelve. It took fourteen years more agitation before a limited Factory Act was passed, restricting the employment of children between nine and thirteen to half time, and over thirteen to sixty nine hours a week.

No wonder that in the meanwhile many thousands perished, or that those who grew up were weak, sickly and deformed, besides being grossly ignorant and depraved. Oastler, one of the labour leaders of his day, said: "I saw full grown athletic men whose only labour was to carry their little ones to the mill, long before the sun was risen, and bring them home at night long after he had set. I heard the curses of these broken hearted fathers, they were loud and deep, but registered never to be forgotten."

The Introduction of Steam Power.

King George III. saw a Birmingham engineer at his Court. "Ha! Boulton," said the King, "what business are you now engaged in?" "I am engaged, your Majesty, in the production of a commodity which is the desire of Kings." "And what is that?" "Power, your Majesty," replied Boulton, who proceeded to tell the King about the new and wonderful steam engines that he and his partner Watt were now making. James Watt, as a young Scottish instrument maker, had been entrusted with the repair of a model of one of Newcomen's atmospheric or so-called fire engines. After many experiments and great loss he invented the separate condenser, and thus made the first practical working steam engine.

He was financially assisted by Dr. Roebuck, and the delay in completing the invention ruined them both. Roebuck owed £1,200 to Boulton, of Birmingham, and the latter agreed to take Roebuck's share in this much ridiculed engine patent in lieu of his debt. The firm of Boulton and Watt then tried again to perfect the invention, and after several years' loss and delay succeeded beyond even their own expectations. This new invention was first used for pumping the water out of mines, but the millowners seeing the possibilities of adapting this new power, went (as Boulton expressed it) steam engine mad. The necessity of cheap fuel being apparent, manufacturers began building their new mills in situations where coal could be easily obtained, and thus the manufacturing centres grew near the coalfields. With the cheap power thus procured inventions multiplied and factories increased in number and size.

The Rise of Manufacturing Towns.

Until the dawn of power manufacture, the towns had not welcomed the presence of the poor who had been turned off the land. Town people were exclusive, called even those of neighbouring towns foreigners, and had no idea of extending their borders or increasing their population. Two hundred years ago Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham were small country places, but population was increasing fast, and Manchester and Birmingham doubled theirs in thirty years.

Factory owners having erected their new steam driven mills in towns, they naturally attracted thousands of the homeless wanderers from the country in search of work. The puzzle was, where were they to live. The landowners of the surrounding neighbourhood were not willing to sell land for cottages, and there were no "Garden City" builders in those days. The middle class in the towns had however rather large gardens behind their houses; and there being no building bye laws or regulations of any kind, thousands of little hovels were run up round these gardens. Then as the owners of these little dens became more wealthy they moved further away, and divided up their own houses into three or more tenements for the poor country people who came into the towns clamouring for rooms. In these new slum districts there was no water supply or sanitation, no through ventilation, and but little light or air. No wonder that the poor died like flies, that one tenth of the deaths were from smallpox, or that town death rates were often three times their present high figures. Some towns only increased their population by drawing from the country, as at one time the death rate exceeded the birth rate in the towns.

Workmen's Wages 130 years Ago.

We can get a good idea of the wages earned by the artizan population from Arthur Young's travels, which he began in 1767. With bread at 5d. a quartern loaf, butter 6½d. lb., cheese 3¾d., and mutton, beef, pork and veal 3½d., we can reckon that the cost of an artizan's food would be about three fourths of what it now is.

Colliers at Newcastle	earned	15s. a week,	Wakefield 11s.
Cutlers at Sheffield	,,	13s. 6d. ,,	Rotherham 10s.
Potters at Burslem	,,	9s. 6d. ,,	Worcester 9s.
Weavers at Wakefield	,,	10s. ,,	Manchester 7s.
Drugget weavers at Braintree	earned	9s. week.	
Carpet weavers at Wilton	,,	11s. ,,	
Wool combers at Braintree	,,	12s. ,,	
Pinmakers at Gloucester	,,	10s. to 15s.	
Blanket weavers at Witney	,,	10s. to 12s.	
Calimanco weavers at Lavenham	,,	only 5s. 9d.	

Young estimates that the artizans earned on an average 8d. a week over the agricultural labourer, whose average earnings were 7s. The artizan's advantage however in the town was, that his wife and children could also obtain work and aid the family exchequer. In the weaving industries the average wages were: women 4s. 2½d-, boys 2s. 11¾d., and of girls 2s. 7d. A man, wife, son and daughter working at Manchester could earn 16s. 9d. between them, but it cost them nearly as much for food as it would do to-day.

The workmen realized that everything was going up faster than their wages; thus the journeyman tailors said that their wages from 1777 to 1795 were 21s. 9d. a week, and they could then buy 36 loaves at 7¼d.; their wages went up to 27s. in 1795, but with bread at 1s. 5d., they could only buy 18½ loaves. Printers got an advance of 6s., but found they were worse off than before.

Wars cause Borrowing and Sorrowing.

In the period between 1688 and 1816 the condition of the poor was rapidly becoming worse and worse. It was a popular subject to speak of "setting the poor to work," and about two hundred books and pamphlets were printed between those years describing the misery of the poor, and attributing their poverty to various causes. One pamphleteer solemnly attributed poverty to the rise of the Methodists, whom, he considered, encouraged idleness. Others charged the poor with drunkenness and idleness. Very few however saw that poverty was being directly caused by the monopolization of the land by the aristocracy, and by the indirect taxation of the poor that was yearly increasing.

Until the reign of William and Mary, English wars had been conducted on a cash basis, but the ease and facility with which a national debt was then contracted set a fatal example to successive statesmen. In 1688 the debt was only £664,264, but with Marlborough's foolish wars, by the death of Queen Anne, this debt had risen to 37 millions, costing the people three millions a year in interest. By 1775, before the war with America, owing to wars with Spain and France, 43 millions were spent, and then in wars both for and against Maria Theresa 82 millions more of the people's money was squandered. These vast sums raised the national debt to 126 millions, and cost the people in interest 4½ millions a year. As there were then not more than three million families in this country, this 4½ millions meant on the average one penny per family per day in payment of this interest.

Within seventeen years however all these figures doubled; the American war cost 97 millions, and, with other wars, ran up our National Debt to 237 millions, with an interest charge of nine millions, equalling twopence per family per day, from their scanty earnings to pay for quarrels of which they knew little and cared less.

Poor pay the Piper for Rich Men's Tune.

The great and crushing blow, however, came from the fearful war with France from 1793 to 1815. It was an altogether unnecessary war, but the English aristocracy knew that unless they crushed liberty in France they could not hope to preserve their unjust privileges in this country. This war cost us no less than 831 millions and raised the national debt in 1816 to 846 millions, costing this country 32 millions a year in interest. By this time the population was about 4 million families, so the war debt interest was £8 per family per year, or over five pence per family per day.

Nor were these war taxes all that the suffering people had to bear. Not content with their own quarrels, vast sums were being wasted in helping other nations with their armies and their wars. Again, the system of providing offices and pensions for the hangers on of the Royal Courts, and the buying of the votes of the Members of Parliament, wasted many millions of the people's money. Whilst all this talk was going on about setting the poor to work, the taxation on them was going up by leaps and bounds. By 1816, with a population of 19½ millions, the taxation had gone up to 74½ millions, and of this amount 50 millions was in indirection taxation, trifling to the rich, but burdensome and oppressive to the poor. Again reckoning 4 million families, this gives us an average taxation per family of £18 10 0. No wonder then that Mr. Preston, a Member of Parliament of the period, estimated (after allowing for the larger contributions of the rich) that the common day labourers paid £10 a year in indirect taxation. Of this amount £3 6 8 went to pay for the King and his servants, and £6 13 4 to pay for the interest upon war debts that they had nothing to do with the borrowing of. £10 a year is sevenpence per day.

The Rise of Provisions in George III Reign

During these years few people realized that the poor were being taxed at all, but in reality they were paying very much more than their fair share. As tax after tax went on all sorts of articles, every landlord, farmer and tradesman, passed on the taxation to those below them by raising the price of what they had to sell. Of course everything went up enormously in price, even wages went up, but as in 1550 not to the same extent as the cost of living advanced.

In the fifty years of George III's reign, 1760-1809, prices advanced at the following rate :—

Flour per bushel	from	5	10	to	16	8.
Bread per quartern	,,	0	4	to	1	2.
Bacon per lb.	,,	0	6	to	1	2.
Butcher's Meat per lb.	,,	0	4	to	0	8.
Cheese per lb.	,,	0	4	to	0	10.
Butter per lb.	,,	0	6	to	1	6.
Soft Sugar per lb.	,,	0	3	to	0	10.
Soap and Candles	,,	0	6	to	1	3.

If the same quantity of eatables be reckoned as we estimated for the labourer's forefather in 1500, the cost would be brought up from 1s. to 14s. 10d., and this allows nothing for any kind of drink, or for rent, clothes, or fuel. It is evident therefore that they were unable to buy in 1809 half as much to eat and drink as their ancestors had done three-hundred years earlier.

The labourer's weekly income can be reckoned in quartern loaves instead of money terms.

Year.	Loaves.	Wages.	Year.	Loaves.	Wages.
1500	56 at ½d.	... 2 4	1792	15 at 7d.	8 9
1550	28 at 1½d.	... 3 6	1803	12 at 10d.	10 0
1688	24 at 3d.	... 6 0	1809	10 at 1s. 2d.	11 8
1785	16 at 6d.	... 8 0	1812	9 at 1s. 8d.	15 0

The price of Ale had increased enormously, the duty upon Home-Brewed being 4d. per gallon. It was estimamated that an ordinary farmer paid about £16 a year duty on the ale he brewed for himself and his men. The price of tea was 7s., being 3s. 6d. for tea and 3s. 6d. for duty.

Why Shoes went up in Price.

That the rise in prices was accelerated by the imposition of taxation can be shewn by the cost of shoes in 1760, as compared with 1809. In the first year a pair of men's shoes cost 5s., and a pair of women's 3s., so they had gone up from the 6d. and 1s. of 1500 and 1550. But in 1809 this same quality of shoes had gone up to 12s. and 7s. 6d. respectively. Why was this? First, because of the tax upon leather, which was 3d. per lb., and therefore amounted to about a shilling a pair upon countrymen's shoes. Even if farmers killing their own beasts and tanning their own leather made their own shoes, they must hurry off to the nearest town to pay the tax or they might be thrown into prison for fraud. Now this did not account for the whole of the rise; but the shoemaker had to pay at least double for his tools and three times as much for his food. He must pay tax on the bricks of his house and on the tiles for his roof. If his house was a large one, he must pay an annual tax on his windows. If he employed workmen he must pay them more wages or they would starve. With everything that he wants going up in price he must at least double his prices, and then he must add the tax on his leather over and above all other costs. So the shoes go up from 5s. to 12s., and so the labourer and his children go barefoot. Then the shoemaker wonders why trade is bad, and blames everybody except the people who went to war, and took the nation's boot and shoe money to pay for foolish quarrels and costly blunders.

In the House of Lords the Duke of Buckingham shewed that the actual imposition upon a farmer and his labourers in the tax upon leather was 26s. per year, but this was only the actual tax, and did not allow for the shoemakers' added charges.

Why Salt, Soap and Candles were dear.

Another example of the increase of price caused by indirect taxation is that of salt. English salt was selling a century ago in the new United States of America for 3s. per bushel, after the English makers of it had had the expense of freight. Here in this country the same salt was selling at 20s. a bushel. It was estimated that the average labourer with a family used a bushel of salt a year. If so, the difference between the price he paid and what the Americans paid was 17s. a year, or 4d. per week tax upon his earnings.

The soap tax also pressed hardly on the poor. The rich grumbled at the dirtiness of the poor and taxed their soap 3¼d. per lb., raising its retail price to 8d. per lb. The people could have made their own soap for 2d. per lb., but but if they did they must pay the same 3¼d. tax or become liable for prosecution.

Their candles were taxed a penny a pound, rushlights were certainly exempt, but there must not be too much tallow on these or the tax-gatherer would seize them.

The poor were obliged to thatch their cottages with straw because of the tax upon tiles, to put in small windows because of the tax upon larger ones, and taxed upon their bricks if they wished to mend their ruined walls.

The taxes upon clothing were almost equally bad, so much so, that two thirds of the price went in taxation. In calico prints for illustration—tax on the raw cotton, tax on all the colors, tax on all the machinery, and on all the oil and dyes, so that the prices trebled when the clothing came to the retail purchasers. Thus the poor people went in rags, and the nobility amassed fortunes.

Unfortunately, the drink of the poor was not taxed in even proportions. The Duke of Buckingham reckoned an average farmer to pay £13 a year tax on his malt and hops for himself and his men. William Cobbett reckoned it at £60 a year. Whilst six sevenths of the price of salt went for taxation, one seventh only of the price of gin was tax.

Weavers Wages go down as Bread goes up.

It will readily be understood that this taxation pressed most heavily upon the artizan population, and particularly on the new Machine Minding operatives. It also aggravated the distress which was being caused by the displacement of hand labour by machinery. Handloom weavers were being rapidly driven out of employment. In Bolton their wages went down from 25s. in 1800, to 9s. in 1820, and to 5s. 6d. in 1830. This was at a time when the cost of bread was going up terribly.

Year.	Weaver's Wages.	Wheat per Qr.	Loaves a week's wages would buy.
1802	13s. 10d.	67s.	17
1806	10s. 6d.	76s.	9
1812	6s. 4d.	122s.	4
1816	5s. 2d.	76s.	4½
1817	4s. 4d.	94s.	4

One of the Scottish Members of Parliament said that the workmen at Perth were in a most wretched and starving condition, unable at the utmost to earn more than 5s. a week. One thousand of the Carlisle weavers petitioned the Prince Regent that they might be transported to Canada, as they were starving. The Mayor and Corporation of Coventry, bore testimony to the peaceable and patient conduct of the workmen of their town, and said that trade was in a most flourishing state, immense fortunes being made by the masters, but in consequence of insufficient wages being paid, the workers were in great distress. The House of Commons had a report upon the "cruel privations and intolerable burdens" of the Leicester Framework Knitters, but did not interfere for their relief. This distress was caused by the action of the larger Manufacturers, as one employer wrote to another in 1819, "We are all lowering the poor stocking makers' wages again . . . compelled to it by the great hosiers, who are engrossing the whole trade of the country and starving out both hosiers and stocking makers, that they may add house to house and field to field."

The Persecution of Factory Workers.

The condition of the factory operatives in those days, when they were forbidden by law to combine in any way to ask higher wages, was pitiable in the extreme. In February, 1823, a list was published at Manchester of the fines which were enacted upon weavers at Tydesley. The temperature in these weaving sheds was kept at from 80 to 84 degrees, the men worked fourteen hours a day, with the door locked during working hours, excepting for half-an-hour at tea time. The workers were not allowed to send for water to drink in the hot factory, and by master's orders even the rain water was locked up to prevent them drinking it.

Any Spinner	found with his window open	...	fine 1s.
,,	found dirty at his work	...	,, 1s.
,,	found washing himself	...	,, 1s.
,,	repairing belt with gas lighted	...	,, 2s.
,,	putting gas out too soon	...	,, 1s.
,,	gas light too long in morning	...	,, 2s.
,,	having gas light too large, per light		,, 1s.
,,	heard whistling	...	,, 1s.
,,	being five minutes after last bell	...	,, 2s.
,,	found in another's wheel gate	...	,, 1s.
,,	being sick, and cannot find another spinner to give satisfaction, must pay for steam per day	...	,, 6s.

The masters let their workpeople miserable small cottages at 3s. 6d. a week, and cellars at 2s. 6d. Although they were not obliged to live in them, they had to pay the rent of these hovels whether they lived in them or not. If a sick man induced a friend to come and take his loom, both had to pay cottage rent. Workpeople were expected to buy all their food at shops where their masters directed them, and at which the masters were allowed up to 15 per cent. off the workers' purchases.

Laisser-Faire Theories Adopted.

About a century ago a great change came over the thoughts and opinions of the people of this country with regard to the duty of Government to regulate the lives of the people. For many hundreds of years it had been considered desirable that the rate of wages and the price of food should both be fixed by law. This power had generally been used to the detriment of the poor, but in theory at any rate it was meant to protect them. A new school of economists now came forward to declare that both masters and men should be allowed to do what they liked in hours of labour and amount of wages. This abstract theory would have been very good if the workmen had been on an equality with masters, but weak and defenceless as they were, without Trades Unions or combinations, they were at the mercy of the employers; who, under these new methods, could starve their men into submission. Under the influence of the commercial classes the old apprenticeship and wages laws were repealed, and the fixing of the price of bread by law was given up. Unregulated competition became the order of the day, and a "Laisser-Faire" or "go as you please" theory took the place of paternal government. One bad result of this change was the impetus which it gave to our foreign or export trade in preference to our home trade among our own people. Manufacturers forgot that by their all cutting down wages they were cutting down the purchasing power of their customers. Every increase in wages of labour means an increase in the demand for the production of labour, and therefore more work for unemployed labour, whilst every decrease in wages means a further loss amongst those with whom the wages would have been spent. The influence of this theory is now slowly passing away, as men come to realise that good wages for good labour is the true secret of national prosperity.

The march of the Blanketeers.

The conclusion of the war with France brought still more suffering to the labouring classes, for the bad effects of wars are felt more after they are concluded than while they are being waged. In Suffolk and Norfolk the labourers marched with banners inscribed "Bread or Blood." In Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire the rioters were called Luddites, and they broke the stocking frames and the machinery in the cotton mills, considering that these had caused their distress. Hampden clubs were founded all over the kingdom and educated the people as to some of the causes of their misery. William Cobbett published the Political Register, and in November 1816, it was reduced in price from 1s. $\frac{1}{2}$d. to 2d. It was then read everywhere, in workshops and fields, and exercised a great influence upon workers. The effect of Sunday Schools was becoming more apparent in the larger number who could read and understand these economic problems as presented in Cobbett's lucid style. Soup kitchens were opened for the relief of the poor, but they were spurned and in some places destroyed.

A Yorkshire schoolmaster, named Spence, started a society called the Spencean Philanthropists. Its members met one day at Spa fields, and marching to the Tower of London summoned the soldiers to surrender. Being laughed at they went back to the city to plunder firearms, but were dispersed by the Lord Mayor.

The government was alarmed at the spread of these Hampden clubs and brought in four oppressive Acts of Parliament to crush the rising spirit of the working men. These occasioned a body of men to meet in Manchester to march to London, who, carrying blankets or great coats strapped on their backs, were nicknamed Blanketeers. The Magistrates came upon them and read the Riot Act, but some hundreds of them proceeded on their way to Macclesfield. Their numbers so rapidly diminished that by the time they arrived at Ashbourne only six were left.

The Derbyshire Insurrection, 1817.

Instead of being pleased with the failure of the blanketeers march, the Government sent a number of spies with a man named Oliver at their head into the Midland counties to urge the people into open insurrection, so that they might be crushed by the military. The workmen's leaders however warned their men against the spies and foiled them. Oliver, who was in the pay of Lord Sidmouth and Lord Strafford, went amongst the ignorant Derbyshire people inciting them to rise, and telling them that the men of London were waiting to join them. A leader was found in Jeremiah Brandreth, a Nottingham framework knitter. He came to the village of Pentrich, near Ripley, in Derbyshire, and told them that the Nottingham people had already seized the castle. This was not true, but it was what he had been told to say by the spy Oliver. Gathering a small number of men, he assembled his forces in an old barn at South Wingfield, and they then went through the neighbourhood demanding men and firearms. At the farm of widow Hetherinton they made their usual demand, and when refused, Brandreth put his gun through the window and shot one of the widow's men. Next day they appeared before the gates of the Butterley Foundry, hoping to get a small cannon from there, but the manager, Mr. Goodwin, had closed the gates. By the time they reached Eastwood, their numbers had increased to three hundred, but they were ragged, famished, and drenched with rain. There they were met by a troop of horse from Nottingham, and at the sight they fled in confusion. Brandreth and a considerable number of othess were taken prisoners, and tried at a special assize at Derby. They were defended by Thomas (afterwards Lord) Denman in an eloquent manner, but twenty were sentenced to transportation, and Brandreth, Ludlam and Turner were hanged, and then beheaded as traitors. There were several other small insurrections in various parts of the country. They were all suppressed, but some of the juries before whom the prisoners were tried felt pity for the starving labourers, and declared them not guilty.

Machine Breaking in Lancashire.

In the year 1819 the people became desperate and called meetings to denounce the Corn Laws. Several were held at Manchester, and on Monday, August 16, one was being held near St. Peter's Church when the Yeomanry and Hussars came dashing among the unarmed crowd. The people in their frantic attempts to escape became piled in one vast heap. The leaders of the meeting were seized, some seventy persons were injured and six lives were lost. Great meetings were then held in many large towns, and addresses sent to the government condemning the Manchester outrage.

Four years later a tremendous commercial crisis occurred and a large number of banks stopped payment, involving a loss to the country of about one hundred millions. This caused great distress among the factory operatives who considered that their woes were due to the power looms which they worked. In 1826 they rose in open war against them, and in one day every power loom in Blackburn, and within six miles of it, was smashed. The mob proceeded from town to town, wrecking mill after mill, sacking bakers shops, and regaling themselves freely in public houses. In one week no less than one thousand power looms were destroyed, valued at thirty thousand pounds.

The distress was aggravated by an extraordinary drought which prevailed that year. Water was sold in small quantities like beer, and those who could get it sent jars of water as presents to their friends. Whilst the people were thus in distress the terrible Corn Laws kept the supply of food back from abroad, for which the poor people were starving and dying.

Now this poverty was not only caused by the drought or the Corn Laws, but was largely the result of all the indirect taxes for the payment of interest on the national debt. A labourer who drinks and fights, and then borrows money to pay his fine, is lessening his children's food for weeks to come. England had the drunken spree of war and her children were now suffering.

Trades Unions Legalized.

For nearly three hundred years after the destruction of the Trades Guilds under Edward VI., and until 80 years ago, there were no Trades Unions recognised in this country. When however factories were coming into use, and steam power was developing a manufacturing nation out of an agricultural one, then workmen found the absolute necessity of combining if they were to obtain a living wage.

They were faced however with the combination laws, which made it illegal to even meet to consider their grievances. These laws made the export of any machinery a crime, and an offence for any English artizan to go out of the country in search of better paid employment. Although these laws prevented open and avowed combinations, secret societies became very numerous, and nearly all trades had some organization. Violence was met by violence, and unpopular employers and managers lived in constant fear of their lives. Workmen who would not join the union had their tools destroyed, and were often maimed and sometimes murdered. However much this may be deplored, it is not to be wondered at when hundreds of workmen were being convicted as criminals, merely for speaking together of their desire for a raise of wages. Any one justice was empowered to sentence to two months' imprisonment any workman who joined any trade combination, and as justices were generally employers, these were not idle laws. They were also denounced by the aristocracy for giving more power to the working classes, and by the clergy for creating discontent, whereas contentment was the virtue which the clergy always prescribed for the "lower classes."

This question was brought before Parliament in 1822, two committees were appointed, and a thorough going Repeal Act passed in 1824. This was considered too revolutionary, and it was therefore repealed and another substituted in the following year. This latter Act gave men permission to meet and discuss their own wages, so long as they did not discuss anybody elses work or wages.

How the Rickburnings were Avenged

When the reform ministry came into office in 1830 they found the country in almost open rebellion. The labourers were rising everywhere, destroying machinery and setting fire to ricks. The movement spread through the Southern, Eastern and Midland Counties, and even shewed itself in Cumberland, and at night time corn stacks, hay ricks, barns and farm buildings were seen blazing in all directions. So large was the number of prisoners taken that two special commissions were sent to try them. Three hundred prisoners lay in the gaol at Winchester, and when the court met they were brought in batches of twenty at a time, and everyone had sentence of death recorded against him. Six were actually hung, twenty were transported for life, and the remainder for shorter periods. In one place a child of fourteen had sentence of death pronounced on him.

Two brothers, William and Henry Packman, were escorted by a regiment of Scotch Greys to Penenden Heath to be hung. At the sight of the gallows one exclaimed "that looks an awful thing" "Brother," said the elder, "let us shake hands before we die." The younger at first refused to have the cap drawn over his eyes saying he "wished to see the people as he died."

Even the *Times* newspaper declared "that we do affirm that the actions of this pitiable class of men (the labourers) as a commentary on the treatment experienced by them at the hands of the upper and middling classes; the gentlemen clergy (who ought to teach and instruct them) and the farmers who ought to pay and feed them, are disgraceful to the British name. The present population must be provided for in body and in spirit on more liberal and christian principles; banditti less criminal than those who have made them so—than those who by a just but fearful retribution will soon become their victims." Owing to the long suffering patience of the poor this revolution has not yet come about, and they still cry for justice to be done to them.

The Six Dorset Labourers, 1835.

The aristocracy were determined to prevent the country labourers combining together to obtain higher wages. Six poor men in Dorsetshire took part in trying to form an Agricultural Labourers' Union in 1835. They were apprehended and tried at Dorchester under an obsolete statute of George the Third's, which made the administering of any oath unlawful. These men were quite ignorant of such a law, and were not aware that they had been guilty of any offence. They were, notwithstanding, found guilty, and each sentenced to seven years' transportation. They were hurried out of the country and despatched at once to Australia, in order to forestal the public sympathy which, it was foreseen, so severe a sentence must excite. Petitions were poured in from various parts of the country, and a monster meeting of between 20,000 and 30,000 working men was held in Copenhagen Fields, London, to remonstrate against the sentence. The meeting excited great alarm, and cannons were planted in the streets in view of a riot. Public opinion ran so strongly in favour of the poor, ignorant, ill-used labourers, that a free pardon was sent out to them in Van Dieman's land, and they were brought back to England in 1837.

This abominably unjust prosecution had the effect of bringing the abject poverty of the agricultural labourers before the artizan and middle classes. As one sarcastic lecturer expressed it: "What!" he cried, "Six shillings a week, and the morning sun, and the singing of birds, and the sportive lambs, and winding streams and the mountain breeze, and a little wholesome labour—six shillings a week and all this, and nothing to do with your six shillings a week, but merely to pay your rent and buy your food, clothe yourselves and your families, and lay by something for old age! Happy people!"

The Chartist Movement, 1832-48.

In 1832 a National Convention was held at Birmingham, and a "Great Charter" was drawn up by six Radical members of Parliament and six members of the Working Men's Association. The points of the Charter were: (1) Universal suffrage. (2) The ballot. (3) Annual Parliaments. (4) Payment of members). (5) Abolition of property qualification for members. (6) Equal electoral districts. A monster petition was presented to the House of Commons, and its refusal was followed by riots in Birmingham, Sheffield, Newcastle, and other places. One method the Chartists (as these reformers were called) adopted to bring themselves before public notice was the going to Church and keeping their hats on their heads during the service. They had also a great idea of a huge strike or sacred month during August, but this project was not carried out. The division of the Chartists into two classes, the moral force men and the physical force men, marks the turning point in English history between constitutional and unconstitutional methods of seeking reform.

One of their leaders was a Methodist minister named Stephens, who countenanced torchlight meetings after they had been forbidden: he was tried for this and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. The popularity of Vincent, another leader, and the report that he had been cruelly treated in prison, occasioned the armed attack on Newport under the leadership of a Mr. Frost, J.P., a Mr. Williams and a Mr. Jones. They were tried for high treason, sentenced to death and transported for life.

By 1842 they had 400 Societies and 40,000 members. There were numerous persecutions, by one of which Thomas Cooper was sent to prison for two years, but no special attempt was made to bring about their reforms until a monster meeting on Kennington Common in 1848. An enormous petition was presented by this meeting, but the movement was so badly organised that the monster petition was dragged to the floor of the House of Commons amid roars of laughter.

The Abolition of the Corn Laws.

The first great result of the war with France was the saddling of the people of England with taxation of thirty-two millions a year in payment of interest upon war loans. The second was the transference of that taxation from the landed aristocracy, who had promoted the war to the shoulders of the poor. The rich saw clearly that if they would keep their rents at the figures they had been raised to during the war, they must now keep out the abundance of cheap corn which other nations were willing to give for our manufactures. It was known that the exclusion of foreign corn must raise the cost of living to the poor, but this had no weight with a landlord Government.

In 1814 and 1815 Corn Laws were passed to exclude all foreign corn except when English wheat was at famine prices of 80s. a quarter. This was done not only to keep up landlord's rentals, but also to prevent English manufacturers selling their goods in exchange for corn. The effect of these measures was to send up the price to 103s., and in a few years to make the 4lb. or quartern loaf sell for 1s. 8d.

Mr. Villiers and others kept urging the House of Commons to consider the poverty which was thus being caused, but without effect. Two men however took up the cause of the poor, Richard Cobden and John Bright. They threw themselves enthusiastically into the work of the Anti-Corn Law League which was formed in 1838. To shew the urgency of the condition of the poor, it was stated that there were 21,000 persons in Leeds whose average earnings were only 11¾d. a week, and one gentleman reported having visited 1,029 persons in Manchester whose income was only 7½d. per head per week. Messrs. Cobden and Bright visited all parts of the country, had several thousand meetings, and caused a very large amount of Anti-Corn Law literature to be sent far and wide. It was not until 1846 that Sir Robert Peel announced in Parliament his change of view on the subject of the Corn Laws, and stated that the duty on corn would be gradually reduced, so that it would disappear on the first of February, 1849.

Richard Cobden and Landowners.

Richard Cobden, the great Englishman who led the agitation against the Corn Laws, in one of his speeches shewed how the landowners of this country had shifted the burden of taxation in this country from off their shoulders on to those of the working classes. He said: "For a period of 150 years after the Conquest, the whole of the revenue of this country was derived from the land. During the next 150 years it yielded nineteen twentieths of the revenue. For the next century down to the reign of Richard the Third it was nine tenths. During the next seventy years down to the time of Mary it fell to about three fourths. From this time to the end of the Commonwealth land appeared to have yielded one half of the revenue. Down to the reign of Anne, it was one fourth. In the reign of George the Third it was one sixth. From 1793 to 1816 land contributed one ninth; and from then to 1845 (when he was speaking) one twenty fifth only of the revenue had been directly derived from the taxation of land.

Cobden warned the landlords and the aristocracy against the time "when the middle and industrial classes should understand how they had been cheated, robbed and bamboozled."

Broadly speaking, all taxation must come out of the profits of land owning or of labour. The taxation therefore that was thrown off by the landowners came upon the workers as indirect taxation, lessening their food and increasing their labour.

With the abolition of the Corn Laws, modern history may be said to commence. Since then, the workers have by means of Trades Unions and Democratic legislation, steadily improved their position and their prospects for future success.

Conclusion.

In this brief scamper through our national history, we have seen how for the last four hundred years there has been a constant stream of labourers driven off from the country into the towns by the avarice and greed of the so-called landowners. During the second hundred of those years the stream was partially absorbed by the commencement of hand manufactures and of seafaring and commerce as occupations for labour. Then as these occupations became fully staffed, so that they could take no more of the land-starved labourers, destitution rapidly increased. After another hundred years, however, came the discovery of steam power and the marvellous development of machine manufacture, which revolutionised industry and for a time took up the surplus displaced agricultural labour. So during the last hundred years two tendencies have been manifest, agriculture tending to employ fewer and fewer men upon the land; landowners replacing labourers with bailiffs and gamekeepers. To what extent this has been the case through the century will never be known, but according to the Board of Agriculture's return in the twenty years between 1881 and 1901, there left the country for the town no less than 1432 farmers and graziers, and 294,627 labourers During those years two million acres of arable land passed out of cultivation, and 6319 extra farm bailiffs, foremen and shepherds were employed. It would therefore appear likely that during the last century more than one million country-born English folk reluctantly forsook their native soil.

During part of the last century, machine manufacture requiring more and more hands has staved off disaster and revolution by receiving into city slums the victims of the landowner's greed. This absorption could not go on for ever, and during this generation machine manufacture has become glutted with cheap labour. Still labour comes pouring in from the country into the towns, driving out of employ the weakest and feeblest of our town labouring class.

Thus we get the unemployed; the indirect result of the English system of landownership; the bitter fruit of the tree of landlordism. Descendants of free born Englishmen, of whom their rulers were not worthy, and who were cheated out of house and home to make room for sheep and deer, pheasants and partridges.

It is impossible to state in this brief sketch all that needs to be done, but the perusal of the story of England Lost may give rise to thoughts how it may become England Regained. It is becoming increasingly realized that the ancient maxim is still good law as well as good gospel, that landowners ought to bear the whole of the taxation of the country. Labour, industry and intelligence ought to be freed, but landowning being a privilege granted to certain persons by their fellow men, ought to pay all national expenditure by taxation upon its ransom value.

The story of the struggles and trials of the labouring classes shew us that the State has been too long the tool of the rich and the weapon of the strong. The resources of government have often been used by the wealthy to crush the legitimate aspirations of the poor. Slowly, but surely, the belief is growing that the function of government is the protection of the weak against the strong. Not as an arbitrary task-master, but as a great hearted watchful friend, the state should help labour to its full and due recompence and reward. No idea of judging national prosperity by average wealth should be allowed to intervene. The wealth of a few individuals can make no State great or prosperous :— the final judgment must pass, not according to individual wealth, average wealth or collective wealth, but according to the wealth or poverty of the lowest and the poorest of its sons and daughters.

" Thus to level manhood bring,
Lord and peasant, serf and King;
So the Christ of God to find,
In the humblest of thy kind."